

## “Look, how this ring encompasseth thy finger:” Posy Rings to Celebrate the Bard’s Birthday

BY BARBARA BASBANES RICHTER ON APRIL 22, 2016 11:57 AM

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The [400th anniversary](#) of the death of William Shakespeare is tomorrow, and institutions around the globe have been preparing for the day with countless celebrations. And here's another way to savor the day: [Les Enluminures](#), an international antiquarian bookseller dedicated to medieval and Renaissance-era manuscripts and miniatures, is offering a selection of posy rings in a nod to the Bard.

Sometimes spelled *posie* or *posey* (deriving from the French word for poetry, *poésie*), these gold rings were popular lover's gifts throughout France and England from the 12th through the 18th century. The bands were engraved on the inside with short inscriptions, usually expressing love, affection, or friendship. Many examples were written in French, then as now, the language of love. Some inscriptions were so popular that goldsmiths kept reference books full of stock quotations.



*"A Loving Wife During Life," England, mid-18th century. Gold. \$7,000. Courtesy of Les Enluminures.*

The posy rings at Les Enluminures date from the 17th to the 18th century and are inscribed in English, with phrases such as "I like my Choice," "As God decreed, so we agreed," and "In my sight is my delight." One of the more fashionable inscriptions (though not currently available through les Enluminures) was, "Love me and Leave me Not," a sentiment engraved on a band given by Nerissa to Gratiano in the *Merchant of Venice*. Shakespeare's characters often exchanged rings: the quote in this piece's title is from Richard III (i 2), where the king woos the widowed Lady Anne. (Richard killed her husband, and this hasty courtship is a brilliant example of the king's mastery of manipulation.)

Les Enluminures gold posy rings are available for \$5,000 to \$7,500. See more [here](#), or stop by their booth at the [Salon International du Livre Rare](#) if you happen to be in Paris this weekend. Further examples of posy rings may be found at the [Ashmolean Museum](#) and at the [Victoria and Albert Museum](#).

[LINK](#)