



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

# The Canongate Wall





## About the Canongate Wall

The overall design for the [Canongate Wall](#), by artist Soraya Smithson working with architects EMBT, incorporated the idea of a range of Scottish stones, letter-cut by Gillian Forbes and Martin Reilly with pieces of writing.

At the lower end of the wall is a townscape based around sketches by Enric Miralles of Edinburgh's Old Town, as viewed from his room in the Balmoral Hotel on Princes Street in Edinburgh.

The rest of the wall features slabs of rock, different types and colours, from all around Scotland. Most of the rocks are letter-cut with quotations, selected to reflect ideas about Scotland's democracy, identity and environments.

The 26 quotations range from poetry to proverbs and psalms. There are quotations in English, Gaelic and Scots and many of Scotland's leading writers are represented.

The original 24 quotations were chosen from a list that included submissions from members of the public.

To mark the tenth anniversary of the Scottish Parliament and ten years of devolution, two new quotations were added to the Canongate Wall, giving us our current 26 carved stones. One of the writers was Mary Brooksbank, the first woman writer to be added to the Wall.

### Our Words: The Canongate Wall

For the Scottish Parliament's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, pupils from Bun Sgoil Toabh na Pairce co-produced a comic about the Canongate Wall, reflecting on some of the quotations and what they mean to them.

The comic is available in [English](#), [Gaelic](#) and Scots.

## 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Scottish Parliament building

To mark the 20th anniversary of the Scottish Parliament building, we are adding three new quotations to the Canongate Wall, which runs along the outside of the Parliament, along the Royal Mile.

These new quotations will be provided by Liz Lochhead, Jackie Kay, and Kathleen Jamie. All three have been the Scots Makar, or National Poet for Scotland.

## The Makars

The position of national poet, named 'Makar' for the Scots term for a poet, was established by the Scottish Government in 2004. The first poet to be appointed as Makar was [Edwin Morgan](#). He already has a quote on the Canongate Wall.



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- Edwin Morgan (Makar 2004 – 2011)
- Liz Lochhead (Makar 2011 - 2016)
- Jackie Kay (Makar 2016 - 2021)
- Kathleen Jamie (Makar 2021 - 2024)
- Pàdraig MacAoidh [Peter Mackay] (Makar 2024 -2027)

Liz Lochhead, Jackie Kay and Kathleen Jamie have each nominated two quotes from their work that they feel are appropriate for inclusion on the Canongate Wall.

## A public vote

The final decision on which quote from each is included is up to the public. You can help chose the ones you think best represent Scotland: its past, its present or hope for its future.

The public vote will be open from 19 February to 14 March.

You and your pupils can submit your votes [online](#)



# Liz Lochhead



Liz Lochhead performs at the Scottish Parliament's Festival of Politics in October 2017

Elizabeth Anne Lochhead was born in Motherwell, Lanarkshire in 1947. She attended Dalziel High School in Motherwell, and by the time she was 15 had decided to go to art school, although teachers were encouraging her to study English at university.

In the 1970s, Lochhead taught art in secondary schools in Bristol, Glasgow and Cumbernauld, but she was also already a published poet and playwright.

She became the Poet Laureate for Glasgow in 2005 until 2011, when she was named as the second Scots Makar until stepping down in March 2016.

Find out more about Liz Lochhead and her work at [The Scottish Poetry Library](#)

**She nominated the following quotes from her work for the Canongate Wall.**

this

our one small country...

our one, wondrous, spinning, dear green place.

What shall we build of it, together

In this our one small time and space?

(written in 2012) from *Grace, A Handsel, New & Collected Poems* (Birlinn, 2023)

love surprises us. It's like when sunlight flings

A sudden shaft that lights up glamorous the rain

Across a Glasgow street

**Epithalamium**, *A Handsel, New & Collected Poems* (Birlinn, 2023)

# Jackie Kay



Jackie Kay at the Edinburgh International Culture Summit at the Scottish Parliament in August 2016

Jackie Kay was born to a Scottish mother and Nigerian father in Edinburgh in 1961, and was adopted as a baby by Helen and John Kay. The family lived in Bishopbriggs, Glasgow, where John worked for the Communist Party of Great Britain, and Helen was the Scottish secretary of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

She studied English at Stirling University, graduating in 1983.

In March 2016, Kay was appointed to the role of Makar, or National Poet for Scotland. In 2021, she handed on the baton of Makar to Kathleen Jamie.

Find out more about Jackie Kay and her poetry at [The Scottish Poetry Library](#)

**She nominated the following quotes from her work for the Canongate Wall.**

The dead don't go till you do, loved ones.

The dead are still here, holding our hands.

From the title poem in *Darling: New & Selected Poems* (Bloodaxe, 2007)

*Where do you come from?*

'Here,' I said, 'Here. These parts.'

From *In my country, Darling: New & Selected Poems* (Bloodaxe, 2007)

# Kathleen Jamie



Kathleen Jamie reads a poem at the Opening of the Sixth Session of the Scottish Parliament on 2 October 2021

Kathleen Jamie is a poet, essayist and editor.

Raised in Currie, near Edinburgh, she studied philosophy at the University of Edinburgh, publishing her first poems as an undergraduate. Her writing is rooted in Scottish landscape and culture, and ranges through travel, women's issues, archaeology and visual art. She writes in English and occasionally in Scots.

Her poem 'Here Lies Our Land' by Jamie is inscribed on the national monument at Bannockburn.

In August 2021, Jamie was appointed the Makar. In this role, she has curated [collective poems](#) from lines submitted by the people of Scotland.

Until recently she was Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Stirling.

Be brave:  
by the weird-song in the dark you'll find your way.  
from *The Storm, The Bonniest Companie*, (Picador, 2015)

And the wild ways we think we walk  
Just bring us here again.  
from [The Tradition](#), *The Bonniest Companie*, (Picador, 2015)