

There's my own private view going on as we speak – in Edinburgh - but I had to get away. Escape the reviewers and the braying art snobs. Bloody broken foot not helping. All not well. I've got as far as a hotel in Broughty Ferry – no better than I deserve. Alone. No one to see me off. ...

I can just make out the voice on the radio - 'one of the great individual voices in post-war British art'. Ha!

There you go, Margaret Morris: you who said I'd never amount to anything!

I hated my childhood, spent in Paisley. Schoolteachers smacked me across the face for being left-handed, my peers tormented me; I spent my summers wandering the garden wrapped in gauze, garlands of flowers in my hair. A wee bit – fey!

At seven, I was sent to Margaret Morris' School of Dance in Glasgow! 1941. She was as imposing as a queen but taller, meaner – steely. She'd trapped me very young and I could see I'd have to fight like a cat if I wanted to be set free.

Years later, when I was 18, I saw a notice in the Glasgow Herald, asking for dancers for the new Celtic Ballet! Founded by the great Margaret Morris. ... My chance to get one back! Show her I was more than just her manipulable flower. Irresistible.

I was already nothing but trouble. I'd been caught up in the SNP, my boyfriend one of the Stone of Destiny robbers *and* I'd even posted bombs in letterboxes in Sauchiehall Street! ... Not to be messed with, you see?

I was always late and out of time. Always in the wrong colour, never even clean. 'Miss Morris' was furious. She summoned me to her dressing room – she was wearing nothing but a wig and eating a bunch of grapes. It was her way of terrorising me. She roared, 'You're not coming to America with us!' But Fergus said I could. J D – the lovely proper arty J D Fergusson! He backed me up. My only friend. I told him I needed to paint out my agonies, not dance. He said I was good. 'Just never go near an art school,' he said. 'Self-teach,' he said: 'the only way!'

I did. I churned out single human figures to start with, usually in crisis or torture. Met Paul Hogarth and married him for the heck of it, had a son for the love of him, and lived in rural Suffolk in blissful poverty: off £2 a week and endless Boots' amphetamines. Lived irresponsibly: bowing to no one, flouncing away from the askance.

But they started to like the paintings I touted in Edinburgh and Glasgow. The Scottish Gallery, the Third Eye. They called them self-portraits but I labelled them so they couldn't know for sure: Mary Queen of Scots, American Woman Bandits, or just Woman, Girl ... Women baring teeth and breasts and claws. Raw. Woman as predator, not as victim – yet somewhere hiding a core of anxious, insecure humanity.

'Oh, she's like Modigliani!' they brayed. 'Soutine!' Bollocks!

'As mischievous as Beardsley, as doomed as Bosch!'

'Repelled by her imagery but just love the use of form and colour!'

'Aggressive self-advocacy,' one smart-arse sneered. 'The stuff of insanity. Self-destructing and taking others along with her'.

Oh, I didn't care, As long as the Scottish Gallery kept loving me, I'd do fine. But then ...

Disaster. I was attacked. Might have asked for it, dunno. I was dossing in a friend's Edinburgh flat. Mistaken bloody identity. Savagely beaten, my back almost broken. So brutally injured I thought I'd never paint again.

Crawled down to Yorkshire: a name like mine must've made me welcome. They seemed to love me in Leeds and Hull and York. And I liked it there; I stayed for a bit. Now somewhere – I'd lost track of where – I had a husband and son. Must look for them one day.

All right, I wasn't exactly stable. A wee spell in a police cell and then a secure hospital for - attacking - one's - mother. Hogarth divorced me, citing my peripatetic lifestyle! I think the truth was more like the drink and fags and drugs.

Couldn't stay still. As soon as I could move, off I went: France, India, Nepal, Peru. Got into animals – much better stuff for paintings than flawed bloody humanity. They let you get really close up. No more puny human bodies with weird appendages, but lovely - trustable - wildlife!

I tried to settle back in. Found a remote cottage by the sea in Berwick. ... Nope, itching again in no time, champing at the bit. Back into the Borders, up through Edinburgh – my one abiding link and faith in me: the Scottish Gallery. But how can I keep painting when I won't stay still?

'One of the great individual voices in post-war British art'. They didn't add: died today, March 2002, aged 67.

I prefer 'The Bad Girl of British art', way, way before any of them. That's *my* badge!

... Pity the poor buggers who find me in the morning, though.