

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

HARRINGTON, Sarah, Mrs Thomas

fl. London 1772–87

According to Foskett, the miniaturist Mrs Harrington was from Birmingham; but very little of her biography has yet been established, despite a number of clues. She was the author of *New and elegant amusements for the ladies of Great Britain*, published in London in 1772 with an extravagant dedication to Princess Amelia. Further such contributions included *A new introduction to the knowledge and use of maps* of which early editions appeared under the name of her husband Thomas Harrington. He was solely responsible for a similar tome, *Science improved; or, the theory of the universe*, issued by the same publishers in 1774. Mrs Harrington (described as Sarah, wife of Thomas Harrington of Hercules Buildings, Lambeth) received a royal patent for a pantographic device for taking profiles on 24.VI.1775 (no. 1100); *Lloyds evening post* (28.VI.1775) reported the award to “the Lady who has long taken Miniature Profiles in the utmost perfection”, noting “her ingenious method of reducing shadows”. Her advertisements appear in the *Oxford journal* from 1.VII.1775, and she was surely the “Lady who is come to town and who takes great likenesses” to whom James Woodforde sat “not above a minute” on 13.VI.1775 (*Diary of a country parson 1758–1802*, Norwich, 1999, p. 78). She was probably the anonymous “lady” advertising in similar terms from 34 or 33 Tavistock Street in the *Morning chronicle* and elsewhere from 4.III.1774). When she arrived in London she advertised repeatedly, in the following terms (*Morning post*, 9.II.1778):

The most striking likenesses, highly finished in crayons, at one Guinea each; by Mrs Harrington (removed to No. 62, South Moulton-street, Grosvenor-square) improved miniature profiles, at 2s. 6d. each, by virtue of His Majesty's Letters Patent: time of sitting a few minutes only. Those Ladies and Gentlemen, who have friends at either the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, or Glasgow, may be accommodated with their likenesses: Mrs Harrington having had the honour of taking likenesses of nearly the whole of the above Universities; as also the first personages, and most distinguished Nobility, with most of the genteel families in England, and Scotland; accurate copies of all which may be seen to the amount of more than 30,000 approved likenesses; so that almost every person in genteel life may be accommodated with his friend's likeness.

The patent, which seems to have been awarded in 1775, evidently excited some controversy. Threatened litigation involving a rival artist, a Sgr Risso, was mentioned in the Leeds newspapers in 1776. Mrs Harrington's assistant, a Mrs Collins, advertised in the *Norfolk chronicle* on 30.X.1784 announcing that she had paid her 60 guineas for a half share of the patent, which still had four years to run.

Some idea of the work of Mrs Harrington (who alone of these silhouettists mentions crayons) may be gleaned from the 1779 portrait of Master Crotch, an infant prodigy shown playing the organ, taken from life at the age of 3 years 7 months (a print is repr. in Highfill & al. 1975, *s.v.* Crotch). It is little more than a

silhouette profile. It is probably safe to assume that most of her 30,000 works were not in pastel, but possible that she may have been responsible for some pastel profiles.

Bibliography

Foskett 1987; Sue McKechnie, *British silhouette artists and their work, 1750-1860*, London, 1978