

ABSTRACT

This study proposes a possible identification of the sitter in Bronzino's portrait of a young man wearing a plumed hat. Although some scholars believe that the sitter was a Florentine aristocrat, we believe that he was a Spaniard who was close to the Dukes of Florence. Among the possible candidates was Enrique Nunes, a wealthy man born in Lisbon into a Jewish family of Spanish origin. That he could have been the sitter is suggested by a contemporary document that places him in the duchess's quarters in the Palazzo Vecchio at the time the portrait was made. Here we consider the possibility that Enrique was that sitter by examining several contemporary documents that refer to him, and by comparing his age, appearance and dress with those of the sitter. On that basis we conclude that the probability that Enrique was the sitter is not small.

keywords

BRONZINO
PHILIP II
ENRIQUE NUNES
ELEONORA DI TOLEDO
INQUISITION
LISBON
ANTWERP
FERRARA
FLORENCE

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A Possible Identification of the Sitter in a Portrait by Bronzino

Based on Contemporary Documents

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Introduction

Among the portraits by Bronzino whose sitter has not been identified is *Portrait of a Young Man*,¹ now in the permanent collection in the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City [Fig. 1a]. Among those scholars who have studied the portrait are Cecchi (1996: 71), Costamagna (2010: 60) and Bayer (2021: 255–257). In what follows, we consider those studies through the limited perspective of this work, namely the identification of the sitter in the portrait.

At a very basic level, the issues requiring consideration are the date when the portrait was made and the ethnic origin of the sitter. These issues are of course, determinative. Regarding the time frame, the above-cited studies mention somewhat different dates. Costamagna assigns the portrait to 1550–1555, whereas Cecchi states it should be assigned to 1555–1556 ‘or shortly thereafter.’ While it is noted that these two estimates partially overlap, Bayer’s estimate, 1545–1550, precedes Costamagna’s by five years. If correct, Bayer’s range would eliminate Enrique Nunes as a possible sitter for, as shown later, he could not have been in Florence during that period.

In this study we shall adopt the range proposed by Cecchi, which we take to mean 1554–1557, or even 1558. There are two reasons for this choice: The first is that it partially overlaps with Costamagna’s range. The second is that Cecchi’s range is based on a chronological study of Bronzino’s work. It should be noted that it is not necessary for Enrique to have been in Florence throughout the period when the portrait was made.

¹ Other names given to this portrait include *Portrait of a Young Man with a Plumed Hat and Sword* (Cecchi 1996: 71).



Fig. 1a Bronzino (Agnolo di Cosimo di Mariano), *Portrait of a Young Man* (1550/1555). Oil on wood panel (85.73 x 68.58 cm). Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City. Object 49-28.

Fig. 1b Pontormo (Carucci Iacopo), *Portrait of Cosimo I de' Medici vestito alla Spagnola*. (1539-1540). Oil on wood panel (100.6 x 77 cm). Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

With regard to the ethnic origin of the sitter, some authors believe the sitter was a Florentine courtier. For example, in his much broader piece on the portraits of Bronzino, cited above, Costamagna asserts that 'in the portrait ... in Kansas City, he [Bronzino] presented a proud courtier perfectly representative of the New Florentine society.' That belief is implicit in Bayer's description of the portrait, for in it we read that there have been attempts to ascribe a Florentine background to the sitter since the late nineteenth century. Such origins are of course possible, but the similarity between the sitter's attire and that of the subject in Pontormo's *Portrait of Cosimo I de' Medici vestito alla Spagnola*, seems to indicate a Spanish origin [Fig. 1b].

It is of course impossible to unequivocally rule out either origin. The sitter's attire in the Kansas City portrait does not exclude the possibility that he was Florentine, after all, it was in Florence that the portrait was made. Indeed, it would be normal for a Florentine to commission a portrait of himself in Spanish costume, precisely to replicate Duke Cosimo I's fashion. On the other hand, it is also possible that the sitter was a Spaniard living in Florence during the period when that portrait was made.² It is this possibility that is explored here.

As stated above, we adopt Cecchi's period estimate of between 1554 and 1557. Before that period Bronzino had been portraying the dukes' children (Cecchi 1996: 37) and it is therefore reasonable to assume that after completing that task in 1554, Bronzino was commissioned to do the same for a relative of Eleonora de

² During the Renaissance, many Spaniards visited Florence. See, for example, Tavares 2012, and Novoa 2008.

Toledo, the Spanish-born duchess of Florence, or for a wealthy aristocrat who was close to her. Enrique Nunes was among the latter.

In the following sections we consider the possibility that Enrique was the sitter in question. In its most basic form, that possibility stems from a meeting between Eleonora de Toledo, whose origins, education and preferences play a determinative role in this study, as it was probably she who commissioned the portrait, and Enrique Nunes, who before meeting Eleonora had spent over two years with the group of nobles who accompanied Prince Philip (later Philip II) in his first trip abroad.

These and other events are described in contemporary documents, including the records of the two Inquisition trials to which Enrique was subject, one in Venice (Zorattini 1984: 37–209), the other in Lisbon (Zorattini 1984: 219–286). These records include a number of non-religious passages that are relevant to this study. In addition, there are many other contemporary documents that add a substantial amount of information about Enrique's life and about certain historical events that affected him. This extensive contemporary material, taken together with some similarities between Enrique and the sitter in the portrait by Bronzino, seems to indicate that he could be the sitter. However, the most important support for this conclusion is the close relationship between him and Eleonora de Toledo.

In the Palazzo Vecchio

A document dated 7 October 1570 shows that on that day, a Spaniard named Diego Ortiz de Vera appeared before the Venice inquisitors to denounce Enrique Nunes who, Ortiz said, lived as a Christian but was a Jew. Here is an excerpt of what Ortiz said:

And asked if he knows one Enriques named Righetto by the Hebrews, and Enrico Nunes by the Spaniards, [Ortiz] answered: It is more than ten years ago that I met him in Florence, at the time [when I was] with the Duchess of Florence, of whom I was her servant. And this Enrique ... in that time was entertained in the court of the most excellent signor Duke of Florence, and practised [his business] in his house and ate together with *signor* duke and duchess and children, and the chambers [of the family quarters] were always open to him. ... And he played [cards] with the duke and duchess almost continuously, day and night. ... And he used to go to church with Don Luis de Toledo, brother of the *signora* duchess (Zorattini 1984: 42–44).³

³ This study includes my translations of several contemporary statements that were originally made in Italian, Portuguese or Spanish. In most cases I also include the original statements. 'Et interrogatus se egli conosce um Enriches chiamato Righetto fra gli Hebrei et fra gli Spagnouli, Enrico Gnune, [Ortiz] respondit: Io l'ho conosciuto in Fiorenza già diece anni sono, in tempo con la signora duchessa di Fiorenza, dela qualle io era suo creato. E questo Enriches ... in quel tempo conversava in corte dell'eccelesissimo signor duca de Fiorenza et praticava in casa sua et mangiava insieme con esso signor duca et la signora duchessa et figliuoli et le camere li erano sempre aperte et giocava con essi signor duca et duchesha quasi continuamente giorno e notte. ... Et lui entrava nella chiesa con il signor don Aloysio da Tholedo fratello della signora duchessa.'

The first item of interest in the statement is that Ortiz was referring to an unspecified time in the 1550s, more than ten years earlier. Hence, it is clear that the duke and duchess Ortiz was referring to were Cosimo I and Eleonora de Toledo. It is also evident that the statement places Enrique in the Palazzo Vecchio at some time during the decade when the portrait was painted. This is in fact corroborated by documents introduced later that show that Enrique visited Florence several times between 1553 and 1558.⁴

Although brief, Ortiz's statement not only shows that the duchess' quarters were open to Enrique but also that he was treated like a member of the family. This is truly remarkable on several grounds. Enrique, a Jew, was not part of any nobility. On the other hand, the duchess was a Castilian with a proud and noble ascendancy and who, by all accounts, was a devout Christian. Who was Enrique, and what were the reasons that explain both his presence in the palace and the special treatment he received from the dukes?

Enrique's background

To answer these questions, we briefly describe Enrique's life from his birth to the time when Ortiz puts him in Florence.⁵ It is however useful to separate that period into two parts, the first covering the first eighteen years of his life. From his Inquisition trials we learn that he was born in Lisbon on 23 January 1531 (Zorattini 1984: 266) into the Enriques family, headed by Nuno Enriques. The origin of this surname is unknown. However, the surname of one of his sons and of his brother was Nunes. The other three sons were surnamed Enriques. In 1536, when the Portuguese Inquisition was installed in Portugal, Gabriel de Negro, Enrique's maternal uncle (Leoni 2005: 28–35), took him and other members of the family to Antwerp, a city which at that time offered some protection to Jews, even though the city was under Spanish rule.

Enrique spent the next twelve years in Antwerp, the first eight without his parents and siblings. About that period, we know that he lived in the house of his uncle, a part-time rabbi who did not want Enrique to go to school. Nevertheless, Enrique learned Flemish from his uncle's accountants (Zorattini 1984: 267). At home the family spoke Spanish and lived a Jewish lifestyle, as it had done in Lisbon. Elsewhere, they pretended to be Christian. From that period we also have a fragment of a letter Enrique wrote to his father, who was in Lisbon, in which he asked for a dozen shirts.⁶ As we learn later, dressing well was a trait Enrique displayed throughout his life.

The last four years of Enrique's stay in Antwerp were different because the whole family was there. We have no information about that period except that in

⁴ Enrique also visited Florence later for, as he told the inquisitors (Zorattini 1984: 41), 'the last time he was there was five or six years before [1570]', that is, around 1564.

⁵ For a more detailed biography of Enrique Nunes see Temkin 2024a. It should be noted that his given name appears in the documents as either Henrique or Enrique. We have chosen the latter as it was how he signed his name (see Fig. 1 in that work), and because that is how Ortiz referred to him.

⁶ 'Fragmento de Carta para Nuno Henriques, Morador em Lisboa na Rua Nova.' Arquivo Nacional Torre de Tombo (ANTT), Fragmentos, cx, maço 1, no. 15. 20 June 1542.

July of 1548 Enrique's father and other members of his family were arrested on suspicion of practising Judaism (Leoni 2005: ch. 17).⁷ As it turns out, Enrique was not arrested for, as he put it, 'only he escaped by saying that he was *Flamingo* (Flemish)' (Zorattini 1984: 267). No doubt speaking Flemish saved him but, also, his having spent his formative years in Flanders must have enabled him to hide his Jewish background in order to convince the authorities that he was Flemish. This shows that Enrique had learned to change his appearance and demeanour to suit the circumstances. This ability would serve him well in the years to come.

The arrest of his family prompted Enrique's father to leave Antwerp. His best option was to relocate to Ferrara, which at the time had a more liberal attitude toward the Jews (Leoni 2011: vol 1 ch. 5). The move took place in two parts; the first at the end of 1548, when Enrique and his father went to Ferrara.

At around the same time an important event was about to take place in Spain: Philip II, then Prince Philip, was starting a voyage, his first outside Spain, toward his father's territories beyond the Alps, namely Germany and the Low Countries. Initially, however, their path included some Italian cities that also were under Spanish control. One of them was Mantua, a city not far from Ferrara.

Prince Philip's voyage

Although the purpose of Philip's voyage had nothing to do with Enrique, we include here a few words about it because it changed Enrique's life in a most remarkable manner. A detailed description of part of the voyage appears in a long book written soon after the voyage ended by Juan Calvete de Estrella, a writer and historian who was Phillip's tutor (Calvete de Estrella 1552).⁸ According to him, the reason for the voyage was that Charles V, then recovering from an illness in Augsburg, wanted Philip to visit him and his territories (Calvete de Estrella 1552: liv 1, 1).

Philip left Spain from a port near Barcelona on 2 November 1548 in a fleet commanded by Andrea Doria that consisted of 58 ships. According to Calvete de Estrella, some of the most important men of Spain were travelling in them as well as a large part of the single men of Spain, sons of *Grandees* and of its nobility. Among them were historical personages such as the Duke of Alba and Ruy Gomes de Silva. Also accompanying Philip was Luis de Toledo, nephew of the Duke of Alba and brother of the Duchess of Florence, Eleonora de Toledo.

Forty days after departure, Philip and his rather large entourage entered Genoa, where he was received with great pomp by many Italian dignitaries. Among them was a delegation from Florence headed, at least in name, by Francisco de Medici, the first-born son of the dukes of Florence, not quite eight years old. Similar fes-

⁷ The document citing the arrest mentions only Nuno Enriques (Enrique's father) and his brother (Leoni 2005: doc 62).

⁸ For a succinct description of Philip's voyage see Kamen's biography of Philip II (Kamen 1997: 36–49). A shorter description appears in Boyden's biography of Ruy Gómez de Silva (Boyden 1995: 20).



tive receptions took place in Milan and Cremona. Relevant to this study was Philip's visit to Mantua, where he spent a few days in January of 1549.

From Mantua the group headed north toward Innsbruck, arriving there on 30 January 1549 (Calvete de Estrella 1552: liv 2, 52). This was followed by long sojourns in several towns and villages in the Low Countries, particularly Brussels, Ghent and Antwerp, where they remained between 1 April 1549 and 31 May 1550. It was during this period that Anthonis Mor (Antonio Moro) made a portrait of 22-year-old Philip [Fig. 2]. After leaving the area, Philip's group continued to travel through Charles V's territory for over a year before initiating the return trip to Spain. Much of that time was spent in Augsburg. It was there that Titian painted a portrait of Philip dressed in armour [Fig. 3]. The return journey ended when Philip arrived in Valladolid on the first day of September of 1551, nearly three years after he left.

Fig. 2 Anthonis Mor (Antonio Moro), *Portrait of Philip II* (1549-1550). Oil on wood panel (107.5 x 83.3 cm). Bilbao Museum of Fine Arts. Inv no 92/253.

Fig. 3 Titian (Tiziano Vecellio), *Philip II* (1551). Oil on canvas (193 x 111 cm). Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. Inv no 000411, rm 027.

Enrique's travels

We now consider Enrique's actions after he arrived in Ferrara in late 1548, not quite 18 years old. Although he was probably excited about his new home, he learned that a far more exciting event was about to take place in Mantua: the forthcoming visit of Prince Philip. And of course, he wanted to see the festivities that were going to be held there. Although his father did not give him permission, Enrique went to Mantua anyway, perhaps attaching himself to the group accompanying Ercole II, the Duke of Ferrara.

Philip and his entourage entered Mantua on 13 January and left four days later. In between those dates, public festivities were attended by the prince and his nobles, all in their best attire. It is not difficult to imagine Enrique's desire to be like them. In any case the events that followed show that he decided to join the group. To do so, he needed a good deal of money for he had learned where was the group going and how long would the journey be. Knowing that in his home there was far more money than he needed, he went back to Ferrara and took 2,000 ducats (an enormous amount) from his father's coffers before leaving again, this time taking *via Augusta*, an old Roman road that Philip's group had taken on their way to Germany. It is likely that Enrique caught up to Philip's entourage before it arrived in Villafranca (a village slightly west of Verona) on 20 January, a few days before he became eighteen years old. Reaching Philip's group was a simple matter; joining it could not have been. It is possible that his wealth, youth, personality and the fact that he spoke both Spanish and Flemish fluently convinced some official that he could be a good addition to the group.

We don't know what Enrique did after joining the group. It is unlikely that he participated in any of the ceremonies that took place during the voyage. And given that he did not have any military skills, it is also unlikely that he participated in the tournaments that took place in many places. But those activities required only a fraction of the time available to the group. The rest was spent in activities that were open to Enrique. There is thus no doubt that he spent most of his time with other young men in the group, doing whatever they did.

What is certain is that he travelled with the group from some date in January of 1549 to the end of August in 1551, when the group returned to Valladolid. Thus, Enrique spent two and a half years in the company of Spanish noblemen. There is no doubt that he developed close friendships with some of them, one of whom was Luis de Toledo, brother of the duchess of Florence.

Undoubtedly, the close-knit nature of the group and the length of the voyage must have endowed young Enrique with the demeanour, attire and refined speech of a Spanish nobleman. Although not truly one, his manners and wealth were prob-

ably sufficient for him to easily pass as an *hidalgo*, the lowest rank of the Spanish nobility. Stated differently, the long voyage in the company of Philip's group must have produced strong changes in Enrique. As I noted elsewhere (Temkin 2024a), his Jewish upbringing became submerged under a not so thin veneer of Spanish nobility that included tastes, dislikes, and cultural differences that were to accompany him for the rest of his life.

Enrique's travels with Philip's group ended after it reached Valladolid. Of course, he could not stay there, at least not as courtier. For some reason he decided to travel some more and spent several months visiting other places before returning to Ferrara, probably in the summer of 1552 or a little later,⁹ more than three years after he had left.

Ferrara

At the time of his return there lived in Ferrara two of the wealthiest Jewish families in Italy, the Abravanel family and the Enriques family, each headed then by a widow: Benvenida Abravanel and Violante Enriques, respectively.¹⁰ Unlike Benvenida, who was very capable with financial matters, Violante had no financial experience, which meant that Enrique, by then her oldest living son, had to run the family business.¹¹ Enrique also started a business partnership with the duke of Ferrara (Leoni 2011: vol 2, doc 1259) and invested money in a variety of projects. Also relevant to this study are his interactions with the Abravanel. These include a serious dispute between him and Iacob Abravanel, the oldest son of Benvenida, which required the intervention of the duke and of other authorities in Ferrara (Leoni 2011: vol 2, doc 1563). On a more amicable note, a sister of Enrique married Benvenida's youngest son, Leon Abravanel (Zorattini 1984: 247).

While his travels with Philip's entourage gave him the appearance of a Spanish *hidalgo*, his activities in Ferrara made him an important person there. For example, in a document cited by Leoni (Leoni 2011: vol 1, p. 45), the Duke of Ferrara wrote that Enrique was a 'magnificent, generous and noble gentleman'. This was the man who went to Florence in the mid 1550s for the first time. He was less than 25 years old.

Florence

The next point to be addressed is the period, or periods, when Enrique was in Florence. From Ortiz's statement we know that Enrique was there during the 1550s.

⁹ The precise date of Enrique's return to Ferrara is unknown. A document shows he was there by 10 October 1552 (Leoni 2011: vol 2, doc 819.)

¹⁰ Even wealthier was the Mendes family, headed by famed Doña Gracia (Roth 1977), but she and her daughter had left in 1551, leaving behind her sister Brianda and her niece Gracia.

¹¹ The Enriques family business revolved around money lending and letters of exchange, particularly in international currencies.

Indeed, documents indicate that he may have gone to Florence in 1553 to collect some debts owed to the Enriques family by some Florentine merchants, among them Bartolomeo Panciatichi (Leoni 2011: vol 2, docs 624; 683), whose portrait by Bronzino is in exhibit in the Uffizi Gallery. Given that Ferrara is not close to Florence, it is unlikely that Enrique's visits were short. In fact, as a result of the abovementioned dispute with the Abravanel family, it appears that Enrique stayed in Florence without interruption between September of 1557 and May of 1558 (Leoni 2011: vol 2, docs 144; 1498). Records thus demonstrate that Enrique went to Florence several times between 1553 and 1558, and it was within those years that Bronzino painted the portrait under consideration.

While it may be that Enrique's purpose for going to Florence in 1553 was to collect debts, we believe that his main reason was to visit his friend Luis de Toledo, who at the time was living in the quarters of the duchess in the Palazzo Vecchio (Sánchez n. d.). This is likely to be when Eleonora de Toledo and Enrique Nunes met for the first time. Given Enrique's appearance, language and demeanour it is possible that the duchess expressed an interest in him and his family. The information he provided her is important and will be described later, after we consider the appearance and attire of both Enrique and the sitter in Bronzino's portrait of a young man with a sword and a plumed hat.

Enrique's appearance and attire

The only information we have about Enrique's appearance is a small number of terse descriptions of him that were offered some years after his visits to Florence by men who knew him. While it is possible that his appearance may have changed significantly between those times, or that the recollections of those who knew him were imperfect, the descriptions give an idea of how he looked during the time he visited the dukes. The following list shows, in chronological order, the names of those men and their descriptions of Enrique. It is noted that some of those descriptions refer to earlier times.

1570. Venice. Unnamed Inquisition scribe:

'[Today was] brought to the Holy Office a man [Enrique Nunes] of average height, dressed like a foreigner with a rounded black beard' (Zorattini 1984: 38).¹²

1571. Évora. Álvaro de Caçeres, prisoner (in the jail of the Inquisition):

'He said that about four years ago, or even more he saw ... [Enrique] ... who was a man of average build, gentleman, with a chestnut-coloured beard ... and he is a well-spoken man' (Zorattini 1984: 234–238).¹³

¹² 'Fu condotto nel Santo Officio un huomo de commune statura vestito a la forestiera, con barba negra e tonda.'

¹³ '... avera quatro anos, antes mais que menos ... e que hũo homem meão de corpo, gentil homem a barba castanha ... he hũo homem bem falante.'

1572. Lisbon. Diogo de Crasto do Rio, *hidalgo*:

‘[Enrique] was ostentatious and dressed with rich clothing’ (Zorattini 1984: 220).¹⁴

1572. Lisbon. Gonçalo Machado, servant of a *hidalgo*:

‘It was around four years ago that he saw a young man [Enrique] dressed in black with a dark *gorra* (or beret)’ (Zorattini 1984: 233).¹⁵

1573. Venice. Capt. Giana, from the Council of Ten:

‘... he said he saw said Hebrew [Enrique] ... with a *velvet beret* (emphasis added)’ (Zorattini 1984: 153–154).¹⁶

1576. Lisbon. Luis Franco, a 50-year-old married man:

‘[Enrique] is a man of average height, rounded dark beard, half white ... small, white eyes and aquiline nose. And wears clothes ... that are buttoned to the end below, and wears a long cape’ (Zorattini 1984: 240).¹⁷

Although limited, these statements allow us to compare Enrique’s appearance to that of the sitter.

The sitter’s age, appearance and attire

While the descriptions we have of Enrique Nunes stem from a handful of contemporary documents, also available are three images of the sitter: the portrait in the Nelson-Atkins Museum; the black-chalk drawing of his head [Fig. 4]; and the x-radiograph of the museum portrait, which reveals the sitter in armour. We shall return to the latter image at the end of this study. The material below refers to the portrait under normal lighting and to the black-chalk drawing.

Of primary interest are the time when the portrait was painted and the corresponding age of the sitter. As stated earlier we base this study on Cecchi’s estimate of that time, namely 1554–1556, or shortly thereafter. For simplicity we take the mid-range value, 1555, as a reference point. As for the sitter’s age, we estimate that he was older than 20 but younger than 30. Hence, if the portrait was made in 1555, we see that the sitter was born between 1526 and 1534, with a mid-range value of 1530. This is compatible with Enrique’s birth year: 1531. Regarding the sitter’s physical appearance, we note that he seems to have been of average build and had a rounded, dark brown beard. These attributes match those in the contemporary descriptions of Enrique. Whether the sitter’s nose was aquiline is uncertain. Finally, we do not know what Franco meant when he said that Enrique’s eyes were white. However, certain facts prompt us to offer the following speculation as an explanation. First of all, as noted in an earlier note, Franco was a Spaniard and probably gave his testimony in Spanish or in faulty Portuguese, which the scribe corrected.

¹⁴ ‘[Enrique] se tratava muito vistoso e com riguos vistidos.’

¹⁵ ‘... avera perto de quatro anos vio hũ mancebo [Enrique] vestido de negro com gorra preta.’

¹⁶ ‘... e dissi di haver veduto pasar ditto hebreo [Enrique] ... con una beretta di voluto.’

¹⁷ ‘homem de meãm estatura, barba preta tosada, mais de mea branca, e os olhos brancos pequenos e o nariz aquilino, e tras hũa roupeta ... abotoada ate abaixo e hũa capa ... comprida.’

The Portuguese document gives his surname as Franco, but the witness was a Spaniard whose name was Luis Francisco or Luis Franco. Both names appear in the record.

Fig. 4 Bronzino (Agnolo di Cosimo di Mariano), *Head of a Young Man* (1550-1555). Black-chalk drawing (13.8 x 10.3 cm). Getty Museum, Los Angeles. Object 90.GB.29.



It is possible that Franco said that Enrique had '*ojos claros* (clear eyes)', or a similar expression, which meant that Enrique's irises were light-coloured. Some support for this interpretation stems from the drawing which Bronzino made in preparation of the portrait which shows that the sitter's irises were light.

Next are the elements that may have been added by Bronzino to reveal something unique about the sitter. As Pilliod stated, referring to another portrait, 'these elements . . . undoubtedly bore a significant relationship to the person depicted' (Pilliod 2010: 7). One such element is the sword, about which Cecchi observed

that it ‘looks more like the ornament of a gentleman than a weapon capable of inflicting mortal wounds’ (Cecchi 1996: 57). We agree. The sitter’s pensive look and his delicate fingers tell us that he was not a man of war. More likely, it could simply be that Bronzino painted the sword’s hilt in gold to convey the fact that his sitter was wealthy. Perhaps coincidentally, that was true of Enrique.

Now consider the sitter’s attire. It consists of a dark jacket, covered in part by a black tunic and a ‘luxurious black *velvet* (emphasis added) cap with a large grey-white ostrich feather ... more ostentatious than most of the headwear found in Bronzino’s portraits.’ (Bayer 2021: 255–257). It is this feathered hat more than anything else in the portrait that makes the sitter look Spanish. Although Franco said that Enrique wore a long jacket under a tunic, and Capt. Guiana said that Enrique wore a velvet beret, both of which match the sitter’s attire, none of the witnesses cited above reported seeing him wearing a plumed beret.

Did Enrique wear a plumed hat?

The interest here is the plumed beret worn by Bronzino’s sitter. Although there is no hard evidence that Enrique wore such a hat, it should be understood that those hats and the corresponding rich attire were reserved for special occasions. One example of such an occasion took place on 13 July 1549 when Philip and his entourage visited Ghent, the birthplace of Charles V. The welcoming party was described in detail by Calvete de Estrella. Here is an excerpt of what he wrote about that day: ‘Adrien de Croÿ ... the governor of Flanders went to receive him. ... And the governors and senate of Ghent and all the gentlemen of the village ... *with tunics and black velvet hats with white feathers* (emphasis added)’ (Calvete de Estrella 1552: liv 3, 109).¹⁸

Evidently, everybody put on their best costume to welcome the prince. And that costume included a plumed hat and a long velvet tunic. There is no doubt that Philip also wore such a hat on that occasion, nor is there any doubt that Enrique did the same. After all, not only was he part of the ceremony but, also, he had spent his formative years in Flanders and probably felt like one of the Flemish gentlemen welcoming the prince.

Part of the family?

While the evidence presented in the preceding sections seems to indicate that Enrique *could* have been the unidentified sitter, several other pieces in the puzzle

¹⁸ ‘Salieron a le recibir Adriano de Croy. ... Y los Gobernadores y Senado de Gante y todos los gentiles hombres de la villa ... con sayos y sombreros de terciopelo negro y plumas blancas.’

are still missing. One is Enrique's supposed continued access to the family quarters in the Palazzo Vecchio; another is the good treatment he received from the duke's family.

One explanation stems from Ortiz de Vera's statement that Enrique played cards with the duke and duchess 'continuously, night and day.' Although the statement seems exaggerated, it is well known that the dukes enjoyed gambling. It could therefore be that after meeting Enrique, the duchess invited him to play cards with her and the duke, as she normally asked others (Baker 2016). If so, it is possible that the gambling may have led to a closer relationship between them. We believe that, on the contrary, Enrique was invited to gamble with the dukes *after* a close relationship had been established. This is supported by a document dated 26 July 1555 (Leoni 2011: vol 2 doc 1593) that refers to a loan that Enrique made to the Duke of Florence. This loan shows that Enrique and Cosimo I already had a close relationship, for it is unlikely that the duke would ask a new acquaintance to lend him money.¹⁹

A likelier explanation for the extraordinary treatment the dukes gave Enrique stems from Eleonora's background. Born in Spain into families that were members of the nobility on both maternal and paternal sides,²⁰ she remained Spanish at heart, always preferring the company of Spaniards (Cox-Rearick 2009; Palos 2015). Given Enrique's undeniable *Hispanidad* (Spanish character), it is likely that he became part of her social circle soon after his arrival in Florence. Further, his business background (see note 11) must have been of considerable interest to her for, as is well known, she spent a good deal of her time seeking ways to increase her wealth (Edelstein 2000). All of this must have resulted in a closer rapport between the duke's family and Enrique for, as Ortiz said, '[Enrique] ate together with *signor* duke and the *signora* duchess and children.' The fact that Enrique played cards with the dukes, or that he went to Church with the duchess's brother implies some closeness, but eating at their table is clear evidence that they regarded him as family. This is further demonstrated by the affectionate name they gave him, *Righetto*, an Italian diminutive of his name (Zorattini 1984: 54). Even closer was the rapport between Enrique and the duchess.

To support the last statement, we go back to the Eleonora's years in Naples, that is from 1533, when she arrived there, to 1539, when she left that city to marry Cosimo I. According to a book written in 1629, Eleonora's father, Pedro Álvarez de Toledo, the viceroy of Naples, 'wanted his daughter to be raised under the supervision of Benvenida, and in her home' (Aboab 1629: 2nd part, 318).²¹ That woman was Benvenida Abravanel, wife of Samuel Abravanel, the viceroy's financier. As is well-known, the Abravanel had been living in Naples since 1492, when Ferrante I allowed them to settle there after the Jews were expelled from Spain

¹⁹ Of course, this monetary exchange has nothing to do with the choice of sitter for the portrait under consideration.

²⁰ Eleonora de Toledo's parents were Pedro Álvarez de Toledo and Maria Osorio y Pimentel. Her ancestors included Grandees of Spain on both the maternal and the paternal sides: The Dukes of Alba (surname Toledo) on her paternal side, and the Dukes of Benavente (surname Pimentel) on her maternal side.

²¹ 'quiso que su hija se criasse debaxo de la disciplina de la Señora Benvenida, y en su casa.'

(Netanyahu 1998: 62–63; Abulafia 2000; Temkin, 2024b). Evidently, Eleonora knew that Benvenida and her family were Jews, and having lived in their house she may have learned something about Jewish history, manners, customs and religion. This may explain the reputed protection she gave to the Jews of Florence, as well as her choice of Old Testament stories as subjects for some of the paintings she commissioned (Edelstein 2000).

Of course, Eleonora learned about many other subjects from Benvenida, including almost certainly finance as we know Benvenida was well versed in such matters. There can be little doubt she passed on this knowledge to Eleonora, who, as duchess, was keenly interested in investments that could increase her wealth (Edelstein 2000). Among them were lending, and certain foreign currency transactions (Edelstein 2000). As we have seen, these business areas coincided with those of Enrique. This is relevant to this study because Eleonora and Benvenida reconnected after the Abravanel family relocated to Ferrara in 1541. Thus, the same 1629 source cited above states that ‘after she [Eleonora] married ... Duke Cosimo de Medici ... in her activities she always relied on Benvenida who lived in Ferrara and whom she called mother.’²²

As noted earlier, the Enriques family, to whom Enrique Nunez belonged, moved to Ferrara in late 1548. Over the years they interacted with the Abravanel family in a variety of ways, some of which were described above. Particularly important in the present context was the marriage between Gracia Benveniste, one of Enrique’s sisters, and Leon Abravanel, a son of Benvenida.²³

We now return to Florence in the mid 1550s, when Eleonora met Enrique for the first time. It is reasonable to assume that she asked him about his background and that his answers led her to discover that he was closely related to Benvenida. Given Eleonora’s feelings toward her guardian and tutor, there is little doubt that the discovery that Benvenida and Enrique were related caused the duchess to treat Enrique like a member of her own family, perhaps like a younger brother. After all, he was like a son-in-law of Benvenida, who was like a mother to the duchess. As such, it may be reasonably speculated that it was she who asked Bronzino to make a portrait of him after the artist finished the portrait of Piero, the youngest son of the dukes (Cecchi 1996: 37).

Other possibilities

Living in Florence at that time were some blood relatives of the duchess who, as such, had a higher priority than Enrique to have their portrait painted. The 1553 inventory of the *Quartiere de Eleonora* shows that her brother Luis de Toledo and

²² ‘Y después que casó con el ... duque Cosimo de Medices ... siempre en sus cosas se valía de la señora Benvenida que habitaba en Ferrara, a quien llamaba madre.’

²³ ANTT, ‘Processo e Confissão de Henrique Nunes’, f 68v. The statement also appears in Zorattini’s transcription of the original trial (Zorattini 1984: 247), but that transcription is missing the following: ‘E a outra [irmaa] se chamaba Gracia per nome de Cristaa, he este nome tem em Ferrara.’ These words appear in the sixth and seventh lines of folio 68v of the original document.

her uncle Francisco de Toledo lived there (Sánchez n.d.). However, in 1555 Luis was around 35 years old; Francisco was even older. If our estimate of the sitter's age when the portrait was made is correct, it would appear that neither Luis or Francisco could have been the sitter.

The x-radiograph

As pointed out by Bayer in her description of the portrait under consideration (Bayer 2021: 255–257), it is difficult to explain the evolution of the painting from its initial version to that shown in its final form. The main puzzle is the drastic change in the sitter's attire: from armour to that of a civilian aristocrat.

There is very little we can add to what Bayer has written other than to speculate that Enrique might have had a say in the decision. As his actions in Mantua show, he was an impressionable young man who probably idolised Philip and wanted to emulate him. Evidently, wearing stylish clothing was the only thing he could do. Coincidentally, he enjoyed this, as Diogo de Crasto do Rio noted that Enrique was ostentatious and fond of rich clothing (Zorattini 1984: 220). It is therefore possible that Enrique keenly observed Philip's attire during the time he spent travelling with his entourage, particularly when Philip posed for the portraits that Mor and Titian made of him.

And so, a few years later, when Bronzino was commissioned to make a portrait of Enrique, it was only logical that he might have wanted to be portrayed in an attire similar to that which Philip wore for those portraits; the fact that the x-radiograph shows the sitter in armour seems to indicate a predilection for the Titian portrait of Philip. However, it could also be that the choice did not please Eleonora. What she wanted was a portrait that revealed Enrique's *Hispanidad*. And the simplest way of achieving that was to portray him wearing the very showy Spanish attire he probably wore when visiting her.

Conclusions

This study has considered the possibility that Enrique Nunes was the sitter in Bronzino's portrait of a young man with a sword and a plumed hat. For that purpose, we posed a number of questions to test that possibility. On the basis of contemporary records, we showed that Enrique satisfies each one of those tests. More importantly, the documentary evidence shows that he was regarded as a member of the duke's family, particularly by the duchess, for whom he was like a

younger brother. This evidence does not prove that Enrique was the sitter in question but indicates that there is considerable probability that he was.

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