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Paper Trails

The Austrian Passport System in Stendhal's *La Chartreuse de Parme*

Abstract: A striking yet overlooked feature of Stendhal's *La Chartreuse de Parme* (1839) is the prominence that this novel accords to passports and movement control practices. This feature is a product of the novel's historical surroundings. During the post-Napoleonic Restoration, the passport had become a favoured instrument of power for absolutist governments across Europe, and the Austrian Empire in particular had set up a notoriously restrictive passport system, extending also to the Austrian possessions and client states in Northern Italy – the scene of Stendhal's narrative. Tracing the numerous references to the Austrian movement control regime, this article argues that the passport motif should be seen, not simply as a “reality effect” or a metaphor for identity conflicts, but as an interface linking a specific political practice and a specific literary form. Thus, the novel provides ample historically accurate information about the contemporary passport system, yet at the same time uses this information as a structuring device that crucially informs the articulation of its space, plot, and major themes. By virtue of this structural centrality, the passport motif opens up a new political dimension in a novel that has often been seen simply as an escapist fantasy.

Keywords: Stendhal, passport, realism, literary motifs

DOI 10.1515/arca-2014-0004

Of the many idiosyncrasies of Stendhal's *La Chartreuse de Parme* (1839), few are given as much prominence as the almost obsessive interest taken in Restoration-age movement control practices, particularly the passport system of the Austrian Empire. The word “passeport” itself occurs 71 times (Finch, *Concordance* 2234–5), to which must be added an array of synonyms (“document”, “feuille de route”, “indication *prouvée*”) and references to other types of identification from personal descriptions (“signalement”) to the tell-tale monograms on protagonist Fabrice del Dongo's shirt. Just as significantly, the novel offers detailed information about

the legislative framework and administrative procedures of the contemporary passport system. At brief intervals we hear of border posts and guarded city gates; of police officers, informers, and spies; of forms, stamps, visas, and passport protocols. There is an insistent note to the foregrounding of movement control institutions in this novel and to the frequency with which Stendhal's characters experience difficulties over absent, misappropriated, or forged passports. In the middle of an extended scene in which the Austrian passport regime serves as a major determinant of the action, the narrator addresses the reader directly to explain this peculiar preoccupation, pointing to the importance of passports in the novel's Northern Italian setting: "Le lecteur trouve bien longs, sans doute, les récits de toutes ces démarches que rend nécessaires l'absence d'un passeport: ce genre de préoccupation n'existe plus en France; mais en Italie, et surtout aux environs du Pô, tout le monde parle passeport." (206)

The narrator is right: during the Restoration, the passport system went through a period of rapid modernisation and became a key instrument of power for the absolute monarchies on the European continent (Torpey 18–20). This was nowhere truer than in the Austrian Empire and its Italian possession of Lombardy-Venetia. Driven by the generational struggle against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France, the central administration in Vienna began developing an extensive police apparatus based to a considerable degree on surveillance and movement control, and by the 1820s the Austrian passport system had become one of the most extensive and modern in Europe (Bürger; Geselle). Its cornerstone was its universality: not only were passport requirements imposed on all travellers irrespective of social standing; they also applied to international and domestic journeys alike, right down to short trips across regional borders. Further, the Austrian passport legislation was greatly enhanced in terms of its enforcement by modern administrative practices as well as an array of technological innovations ranging from standardised, pre-printed forms to anti-counterfeiting measures such as watermarks and blind embossing stamps (Lloyd 221–26). The result was a fine-meshed and highly restrictive movement control regime that served liberals across Europe as an emblem of the repressive political culture of the Restoration.

Seen in the light of the contemporary Austrian passport system, the minute attention devoted to movement control practices in *La Chartreuse* appears to corroborate Auerbach's claim in *Mimesis* that Stendhal's novelistic fiction is embedded in history to such a degree that it cannot be understood without detailed knowledge of its specific context of production (455). However, perhaps due to a certain philosophical bent characteristic of much Stendhal scholarship, studies that touch upon the passport episodes in the Italian novel have tended to ignore this deep historicity in favour of more speculative, existential readings focused on the concept of identity. This is particularly true of work branching out

from Starobinski's seminal 1951 article, "Stendhal Pseudonyme", which interprets the author's fascination with pseudonyms and alternative identities as a means of safeguarding the endless possibilities of subjecthood rather than caving in to external, social constraints (Starobinski; Nishikawa; Bercegol).

The analysis I propose in this article rests on a different assumption, namely that the passport motif in *La Chartreuse* should neither be reduced to a 'reality effect', nor should it be inflated into an existential metaphor. Instead, this motif must be seen as an *interface* establishing links between a specific historical situation and a specific literary form. Thus, as I endeavour to demonstrate, the novel not only provides detailed, at times almost documentary, information about the contemporary passport system, but also uses this information actively as part of a general literary strategy with ramifications across a range of textual levels. Ultimately, this novel, in terms of the articulation of its space, plot, and major themes, can only be fully understood when considering its productive interfacing with contemporary passport practices.

The following sections therefore successively analyse the spatial, narrative, and thematic dimensions of the passport motif in *La Chartreuse*, in each case with permanent reference to the contemporary movement control regime of the Austrian Empire. By way of conclusion, I argue that the passport motif has broader implications for our understanding of this work: on the one hand, it brings to light a hitherto neglected political dimension of a novel that has often been read as an escapist fantasy; on the other hand it highlights a punctual strategy of representation that diverges from traditional accounts of realism as the depiction of a cultural or social totality.

The Anatomy of Passport Control

As a first analytical step, I want to highlight how contemporary movement control practices are functionalised in the novel as a means of defining a political space as well as establishing the rules governing mobility within it. This spatial framework is never discussed explicitly, yet the repeated references to borders and passport requirements provide ample material for a critical reconstruction.

The link between the passport regime and the novelistic space is perhaps most apparent in the scene midway through the novel where Fabrice, having killed the jealous actor Giletti in a duel, is forced to flee the Duchy of Parma. When determining the direction of flight, the political geography of Northern Italy with its patchwork of quasi-independent statelets immediately becomes narratively significant. Fabrice cannot go south to Modena which has an extradition agreement with Parma, nor can he flee west to Genoa which is too far away. The

only viable option is to cross into Austrian territory at the nearby town of Casal-Maggiore and travel east through Lombardy-Venetia so as to reach Ferrara, a city belonging to the Papal States. However, on account of past transgressions against the Austrian passport system (more of which below), Fabrice's name features on "la liste noire de l'Autriche" (218) and he consequently risks arrest if he shows his passport at the border; importantly, he has brought it with him, even though he had no prior intention of leaving Parma. For this reason, he burns his documents and attempts a crossing using the passport of the dead actor.

This course of events sets up a narrative sequence determined so completely by the passport motif that Stendhal (or, more probably, his editor) has given it the running title "Le passeport". As Alison Finch has noted, this sequence contains strong farcical elements (*Stendhal* 15) ridiculing the corruption of the Austrian bureaucracy while at the same time poking fun at the ineptitude of the protagonist. Yet, this humorous dimension coexists with, and at times derives from, an equally strong descriptive interest in the passport system itself which is dissected comprehensively in terms of its constituent elements – from its visual self-representation via its legal, technological, and procedural minutiae to the subjectivisation it effects among administrators and travellers alike.

The first element of the episode's anatomization of the passport system is the description of the passport office itself, aptly characterised by Philippe Berthier as "un équivalent administratif de la pension Vauquer" (160–61). In a manner similar to Balzac's famous description of a Parisian lodging house, Stendhal's narrator focuses predominantly on the exterior dilapidation and internal squalor of the border post, thereby from the outset establishing the passport system as dirty and mundane:

Ce bureau avait des murs sales garnis de clous auxquels les pipes et les chapeaux sales des employés étaient suspendus. Le grand bureau de sapin [...] était tout taché d'encre et de vin; deux ou trois gros registres reliés en peau verte portaient des taches de toutes couleurs, et la tranche de leurs pages était noircie par les mains. Sur les registres placés en pile l'un sur l'autre, il y avait trois magnifiques couronnes de laurier qui avaient servi l'avant-veille pour une des fêtes de l'Empereur. (196)

This description is more than simply a "realistic" background for the novelistic action. The representation of the passport office is anchored in the subjective perception of the protagonist and thus describes both the locale and the person who experiences it. Fabrice's perception is tinted by a deep fear of being locked away in the infamous Spielberg prison which he hyperbolically regards as the capital of the Austrian Empire (195). This fear makes him note the insignia of imperial authority in the form of laurel wreaths piled on the passport registers, and later causes him to fixate three times in rapid succession on the brass emblem

on the police officer's uniform (196–7). Yet the main emotional determinant is the young aristocrat's indignation at having to subject himself to scrutiny by the police: "Fabrice fut frappé de tous ces détails, ils lui serrèrent le cœur [...]. Il était obligé d'entrer dans ce sale bureau et d'y paraître comme inférieur; il allait subir un interrogatoire." (196) Here, Stendhal explores one of the salient features of the modern passport system, namely its relative blindness to rank and social status.

Chateaubriand discovered the intransigence of the Austrian passport authorities in this regard when, enroute from Paris to Prague in 1833, he was held up for several days at the border when trying to enter the Austrian Empire with a passport of questionable validity; this humiliation leads the author and diplomat to vilify the police officer in charge as a "mélange de l'espion de police de Vienne et du contrebandier de Bohême" (II: 194). Stendhal's Fabrice reacts in an altogether similar way. Forced to suffer the indignity of being scrutinised by a social inferior, he focuses on the dirty walls, the ragged hats, and the ink-stained desk, and later takes stock of the police officer with supreme condescension, noting his yellow hands, small stature and blackish face (196). Through the lens of the protagonist's sense of rank, the passport office appears as a shabby, provincial outpost where governmental authority is upheld by social and physical inferiors.

The aim of passport control is identification, and in early nineteenth century this was accomplished by comparing the appearance of the traveller to the personal description given in the passport. Fabrice bears no resemblance to Giletti, and the "signalement" in the misappropriated passport is therefore the major flaw of his hastily improvised escape plan. As Andreas Fahrmeier observes, only two of the descriptive categories used in early nineteenth-century passports were consistently reliable as means of identification, namely age and height; the others were either too easy to alter or too subjective (Fahrmeier, "Governments" 224). Always knowledgeable in passport matters, Stendhal's narrator highlights precisely these features, indicating that "la taille de Fabrice atteignait tout au plus cinq pieds cinq pouces, et non pas cinq pieds dix pouces comme l'énonçait le passeport; il avait près de vingt-quatre ans et paraissait plus jeune, Giletti en avait trente-neuf." (195) If further proof of non-identity were needed, the deceased actor is described in the passport as "fort marqué de la petite vérole" (207), in stark contrast to the handsome Fabrice, who moreover is wounded from the duel and hence obviously suspicious.

As it happens, the passport officer immediately realizes that Fabrice is using someone else's passport, yet nevertheless refrains from arresting him. Here, the scene exploits for comedic purposes yet another feature of the Austrian passport system, namely the questionable integrity and competence of its individual administrators – a perennial problem that the imperial government sought to eliminate with a flurry of decrees threatening neglectful officers with fines or dismissal

(Bürger 77; Fahrmeir, *Citizens* 120). Coincidentally, this particular officer, a local Italian rather than an Austrian, is a personal friend of Giletti's, and since he has not yet learnt of the actor's death, he assumes that his friend has sold his passport to Fabrice – evidently this is a common practice. So as not to cause Giletti problems the officer decides to let the young aristocrat pass, leaving it to a subordinate to complete the actual visa.

This final act of the passport control is represented in the novel with what can best be described as extreme slow motion, testifying once again to the remarkable attention Stendhal devotes to passport matters; in fact, the narrator seems to be just as fascinated by the procedure as the subordinate passport officer, who adds his visa to the passport with ludicrous deliberateness. The descriptive density of this passage is striking: we learn that the visa is a stamp in blue ink; that this stamp leaves a blank field used to note the traveller's destination (in this case Ferrara) as well as the mandatory travel route (via Mantua and Venice); and that the visa is with the officer's signature which is given complete with initial flourishes and concluding dots (198). Like the preceding description of the passport office, this elaborate detailing is unusual in Stendhal (Berthier 160) and conflicts with his ideal of a terse, "Tacitean" style focused on the "choses racontées" (556–7). In this instance, the slow pace does fulfil a narrative purpose, namely that of heightening suspense and conveying an impression of Fabrice's anxiety-ridden indignation. However, these descriptive passages also serve to highlight the real and symbolic significance of movement control both within the novel itself and in its historical environs.

Thus, apart from being an object of comedy, the passport system in this scene functions above all as a means of establishing the novel's political space and its rules of mobility. Northern Italy as represented in *La Chartreuse* is a space criss-crossed by closely guarded borders separating states of varying size and importance. However, as the novel demonstrates on multiple occasions, these borders are porous due to the fact that false passports are readily available while, conversely, loyal police officers are in short supply. In this sense, Stendhal is not evoking a proto-Foucauldian vision of omniscient authority. Rather, the novel uses the contemporary Austrian movement control practices to define a space within which all attempts to exercise freedom of movement have to contend with the passport system as their permanent adversary.

Passport Plots

While incorporating a significant descriptive component, the novel's references to passports also have a function at the level of narrative. The scene at the Casal-

Maggiore border crossing is a case in point, presenting a narrative sequence structurally similar to the folktale: the protagonist needs to progress from point A to point B, but finds his path blocked by an antagonist in the guise of the passport system and its administrators. Characteristically, Fabrice overcomes this obstacle, not through his own agency, but with the assistance of happy coincidences and several “helpers”.

This narrative dimension of the passport motif plays a crucial role in the opening chapters recounting Fabrice’s inglorious participation at the Battle of Waterloo. With scholarly attention typically drawn to the famous battlefield scenes, it has not been sufficiently recognised that this episode, while much less rich in detail, is informed from beginning to end by the conflict between the protagonist and the Austrian (and to a lesser extent French) regime of movement control. The passport system not only prescribes the conditions of mobility within the political space of the novel, thereby providing an indispensable framework for this particular narrative sequence; it also creates a complication of life-changing significance for the protagonist and in this sense acts as a catalyst within the overall plot of the novel.

Rather than undertaking a full exploration of this extended episode which encompasses Fabrice’s expedition to France as well as his return home and subsequent flight to Parma, my aim in the present section is to highlight the underlying narrative structure and its close integration with contemporary movement control practices. For the purpose of analysis, the episode can be divided into three separate parts, each focusing on a different aspect of the Austrian passport regime.

The first part covers Fabrice’s journey to France which from the beginning is beset with passport complications. As the narrator notes, the high social standing of the del Dongos has not spared them from passport grievances, and Fabrice is therefore perfectly aware that a passport is required to cross the border: “En sa qualité de sujet de l’Autriche, Fabrice savait toute l’importance qu’il faut attacher à un passeport. Les membres de sa famille, quoique nobles et dévots, quoique appartenant au parti vainqueur, avaient été vexés plus de vingt fois à l’occasion de leurs passeports.” (74) However, the state of war between Austria and France makes it impossible for him to obtain the necessary document. In order to depart, the protagonist consequently has to use someone else’s passport. As always in this novel, this is easily arranged. The Austrian passport legislation was predicated on a utilitarian principle, using economic criteria to distinguish between “useful” journey and journeys that were either “useless” or “suspicious”. The business trip was seen as the quintessence of useful travel and was exempt from administrative impediments, even in times of war (Bürger 57–62). Cognisant of this fact, Stendhal has Fabrice borrow a passport from a somewhat unlikely

friend, Vasi, who as a barometer salesman is able to travel without hindrance. Yet, even though the crossing into France is achieved with surprising ease, the absurd incongruence between the 17-year old *marchesino* and his paper identity as a middle-aged commercial traveller, described in the document as “*portant sa marchandise*” (49), eventually leads to a wealth of difficulties. In fact, the entire episode alternates rhythmically between failed and successful attempts at subverting the passport system through the use of false passports. Arrested by the French police on three separate occasions on account of his suspicious papers, Fabrice responds by creating ever-new identities for himself, some supported by other misappropriated documents, until at last he is able to re-enter Austria, using the least guarded crossing and assuming the identity of a local huntsman.

In the second part of this long narrative sequence, it emerges that Fabrice is not safe in his native town of Grianta, and his mother and aunt therefore decide to bring him to Milan with the possibility of further flight across the border to Piedmont. This journey triggers another passport scene, this time doubled via the convergence of the passport problems of two different families. On the road, the del Dongos are stopped by the police and asked to produce their papers. The coachman explains that the family does not normally take out passports for the short, domestic trip from Grianta to Milan. This argument fails to make an impression on the, for once, zealous officers: “On entendit un gendarme s’écrier: Qu’importe! s’ils n’ont pas de passeports, ils sont de bonne prise tout de même.” (94). However, the police are in fact not searching for Fabrice, but for general Fabio Conti, the future commander of Parma’s fortress. The previous day, Conti, accompanied by his daughter, evaded passport control in the town of Como and is therefore, irrespective of his elevated rank, being hunted by the Austrian police “comme un voleur” (95). While the del Dongos try to explain their lack of proper travel papers, another group of police officers arrive with the Contis, whom they have succeeded in apprehending. This clears Fabrice and his family of suspicion and they are subsequently allowed to continue on their journey.

While this scene includes many additional details concerning the Austrian passport system and once again calls attention to its indifference towards social position, its true importance lies in the fact that the double passport complication becomes the direct occasion for Fabrice’s first encounter with his future love interest, Clélia Conti. Stendhal could have set up this meeting in several other ways. The fact that he opts for the passport system as a means of engineering a key turning point of the plot not only testifies to the pervasive interest that this novel takes in matters of movement control, but also very effectively connects this interest to the novel’s main thematic complex: the freedom and happiness of the individual in a world of social and political repression.

The final part of the episode relates how the protagonist is exiled from Lombardy- Venetia on account of his illegal French excursion. His mother and aunt's efforts to reach an understanding with the (Austrian) chief of the Milanese police, Baron Binder, quickly reach an impasse. Binder does not know the exact nature of the young nobleman's travels, yet refuses to let the matter rest until the family puts forward "l'indication *prouvée* de ce qu'a fait le jeune marchesino del Dongo; prenons-le depuis le moment de son départ de Grianta, 8 mars, jusqu'à son arrivée, hier soir, dans cette ville" (98). This "indication *prouvée*" seems to be a precise reference to the legislative principle of "ununterbrochen[e] Evidenz", or continuous surveillance of all mobility taking place on Austrian soil (Bürger 78). A mainstay of the imperial movement control system, this principle prescribed that passports were to detail a compulsory travel route, which the traveller was neither allowed to deviate from nor complete too slowly, and, moreover, that they specified the cities along the way where the passport had to be visaed by the police (Fahrmeir, *Citizens* 107). If the passport in this way provided evidence for the traveller's movements, then, conversely, the inability to produce a properly visaed passport was in itself suspicious, suggesting that the traveller had evaded control. In *La Chartreuse*, this inverted burden of proof falls upon Fabrice, who, as Binder is fully aware, is also guilty of having crossed the border using another man's passport (98). With no way of placating the Austrians, the protagonist is forced to flee the country and remains wanted by the Milanese police for the rest of the novel. Importantly, this pivotal event is *not* caused by the protagonist's treasonous presence at the Battle of Waterloo, of which the police know nothing, but by his repeated attempts to circumvent the Austrian passport system.

The long episode that leads Fabrice from Grianta via Waterloo to Parma spans four chapters and more than 60 pages, and it is characterised by the fact that passport systems serve as a constant parameter of the action. Passport regulations not only inform the narrative development of this particular episode; they also have a profound impact on the narrative design of the novel as a whole, orchestrating Fabrice's first encounter with Clélia and later forcing him into exile in Parma. In this sense, the overall direction of the plot is determined to a substantial extent by the protagonist's recurring altercations with the Austrian passport system.

Passport Themes

It might be objected that the novel's references to contemporary passport practices are in fact not the sophisticated literary strategy it is made out to be in this article, but rather – as Stendhal's narrator suggests in the reader address quoted above – an inevitable consequence of the novel's historical and geographical

milieu. This is no trivial question of priority or emphasis. What is at stake is a more fundamental issue concerning the status of the passport motif within the novel's overall design: is it simply an afterthought, added because of its congruence with the geographical location (the divided Italy) and (Fabrice's quest for freedom), or is it rather a literary device with significant formal and structural impact? My argument for the latter is supported by two observations. First, even though the passport system was evidently of signal importance in Northern Italy of the early nineteenth century, Stendhal was not compelled to highlight it to the extent that he does – after all, contemporaries such as Chateaubriand, Charles Sealsfield, and August von Platen also comment on the passport excesses of the Austrians, yet limit themselves to a few indignant outbursts before moving on to other matters. Secondly, Stendhal imbues the passport motif with a remarkable degree of narrative functionality, positioning the protagonist's confrontations with the Austrian passport authorities at key junctions within the novel's storyline. As the examples given above demonstrate, the passport system is essential in terms of narrative and could not have been left out without fundamentally altering the plot and overall character of this novel.

However, the structural centrality of the passport system becomes even more apparent when we note that this system is put to work at different levels in the text, achieving in this way a degree of vertical integration. Thus, in direct extension of the spatial and narrative functions analysed above, the passport motif also takes on a third role as a vehicle for articulating the novel's major themes.

An important theme in this regard is that of politics. As Bardèche has argued in a classic study, Stendhal's novel poses the question whether it is possible to be happy in the political landscape created by the Congress of Vienna (361). In the eyes of contemporary liberals, the Austrian Empire, as the ideological homeland of the Holy Alliance, epitomized the political reaction following the fall of Napoleon. The novelist and travel writer Charles Sealsfield, writing in 1828, gave voice to a common perception: "Never, perhaps, has there been exhibited an example of so complete and refined a despotism in any civilized country as in Austria" (vi). Stendhal was in full agreement. As witnessed, not only by the famous opening pages of *La Chartreuse* which charge Austria with having "enervated" (22) the Italians both intellectually and emotionally, but also by the many criticisms of Austria in *Rome, Naples et Florence* (1817, revised 1826), he regarded Vienna as the stronghold and origin of the repressive policies of the Restoration. In the Italian novel, however, Austrian repression manifests itself above all in the guise of the passport system. Having Fabrice do battle on successive occasions with the Austrian passport system must therefore be regarded as a narrative indictment of the Restoration as a political project.

Significantly, however, the passport episodes in *La Chartreuse* couple this critique of Austria with a theme of individuality explored in a distinctly Romantic vein. As Niklas Luhmann points out, the process of modernisation gives rise to a new semantics of individuality which emphasizes the absolute uniqueness of the individual vis-à-vis all other individuals and therefore casts the individual's inclusion in society as inherently problematic (158–60). Fabrice is an example of this Romantic individualism inasmuch as he finds it impossible to act out his unique individuality within the constraints of Restoration society. For this reason, he is from the outset determined to break free of the repressiveness of his native Lombardy-Venetia, personified initially by his pro-Austrian (presumed, but not actual) father; tellingly, Fabrice's first words in the novel are "Je pars" (44). However, this desire to protect his individuality by removing himself from the stifling surroundings encounters an obstacle in the form of movement control. Here, the novel's general theme of individual freedom versus social and political constraints is articulated concretely via the recurring duel between the protagonist and the Austrian passport system.

What is at stake in this duel is ultimately Fabrice's identity: the passport system seeks to fixate him in terms of where and who he is, while he himself strives to avoid this fixation through the use of false or misappropriated passports. This conflict recalls the long-running debate among Stendhal scholars concerning the status of masks, pseudonyms, assumed identities, and disguises, both in the author's novels – among which *La Chartreuse* stands out as the most clear-cut example – and in his autobiographical writings. As Starobinski has argued, these identity games all adhere to the same basic model which juxtaposes outer appearance and inner truth, conceiving "pseudonymity" as a means of conforming superficially with accepted social norms while at the same time retaining a degree of inner freedom. Starobinski traces the many manifestations of this quintessentially Romantic idea, which sees true individuality as viable only outside of society, across Stendhal's *œuvre*, yet curiously refrains from interpreting the prevalence of false passports in *La Chartreuse* in the same light (193–244). Yet, the passport motif is arguably this novel's most prominent manifestation of pseudonymity in Starobinski's sense. Each of Fabrice's several false passports operates a split between an inauthentic outside and a true inner being – that is, between Fabrice's assumed identities which are supported by passports and hence acceptable to the authorities, and his unique individuality which is outlawed in the Restoration context and consequently has to stay hidden behind masks. Although the passport system is never simply a metaphor in this novel, but also a historical reality, it is used here to represent in a very general way the social pressures that compel the Romantic individual to retreat into an inner exile characterised by equal measures of freedom and loneliness.

Articulating this central theme, the passport episodes foreshadow the novel's other major figuration of Romantic individuality, namely Fabrice's nine-month incarceration in Parma's fortress; as Stephen Gilman has shown, the description of the prison similarly juxtaposes an impenetrable outside and an interior space seen, paradoxically, as a place of freedom and happiness (79–92).

The problem with Starobinski's otherwise impressive interpretation is that Stendhal's obsession with pseudonymity tends to be explained in terms of the author's personal idiosyncrasies, if not as an exploration of the human condition itself; in this regard, his study positions itself uncomfortably between biographism and psychological universalism. However, as the novel's passport episodes make evident, the outside/inside dichotomy is a product of a specific historical situation where a Romantic conception of individuality, closely aligned with liberal politics, collided with the political repression of the Restoration, particularly as it manifested within the territories of the Austrian Empire. As Moretti claims, the novel of the Restoration is characterised by the fact that “the ‘great world’ can no longer be confined to the story's periphery, in hazy revolutions and bloodless wars, but assaults the ‘little world’, actively forging the interiority of its new heroes.” (75) This is precisely the case with the passport system in *La Chartreuse*: epitomizing an outside pressure to conform, it forces the protagonist to seek refuge in his own interiority which he tries to protect by means of false identity papers. In this sense, the passport motif forms the centrepiece of a narrative genealogy of Romantic individualism predicated on the idea that the individual is forced onto paths of interiority when outside mobility is blocked.

Passports, politics and representation

Even though the argument of this article does not rely on biographical evidence, it is worth noting that Stendhal himself on two occasions fell afoul of the Austrian passport system and consequently had personal reasons to highlight it so prominently in his Italian novel. The first time was in 1828. En route from central Italy to France, the author had planned to make a stop in his sometime hometown of Milan. However, when applying for a two-week visa, he was informed by the Austrian police, who were well aware of his published attacks on the imperial government, that he was unwanted on Austrian soil; labelling him “un ennemi irrégulier, immoral et dangereux de la légitimité”, the Chief of Police gave him twelve hours to leave and assured his superiors in Vienna that “la frontière demeure rigoureusement fermée à cet étranger dangereux au cas où il s'y présenterait de nouveau” (del Litto 249–50). Two years later, Stendhal was named French consul in Trieste, then an Austrian possession. Knowing that the Austrians were unlikely to have forgotten

about him, Stendhal, on departing for his new place of service, purposefully neglected to have his passport visaed in advance by the imperial embassy in Paris. As it happened, the Austrian police discovered this omission when the author presented himself at the Lombardy-Venetian border. Stendhal was taken to Milan and was only able to resume his journey after intervention by the French Consul General (Crouzet 530). However, the voyage proved in vain. Metternich refused to accept his credentials and even wrote a letter of protest to the French foreign minister, reminding him of “tout ce qu’il a fait imprimer sous le nom de Stendhal contre le gouvernement autrichien en Italie” (qt. in Crouzet 530). Acknowledging its faux pas, the French government retracted the posting and instead appointed Stendhal to the less prestigious consulate in the central Italian city of Civitavecchia. Ironically, a key responsibility of this role – from which he was on leave when writing *La Chartreuse* – was to issue passports and visas to travellers on the busy sea route between France and Italy (Crouzet 704–6).

Stendhal evidently drew on these experiences when writing the novel. Along with his extensive travels throughout Europe and his career as a diplomat, they made for an ideal individual perspective from which to assess and attack the emergence of passport control as one of the defining political institutions of the age. The result is a detailed and comprehensive literary representation of the Austrian and Lombardy-Venetian passport system, which not only spans its administrative and technological aspects, but also the experience of being subjected to constant surveillance and control.

Yet, as I have argued, the passport system as it appears in this novel is much more than a “realist” reflection of a time and place where, in the words of the narrator, “tout le monde parle passeport”. While Stendhal is clearly aiming to provide an accurate representation of contemporary movement control practices, these practices also fulfil a key structural function within the novel, serving as a means of defining its space, providing material and direction for its plot and offering emblematic expressions of its core themes. With this centrality of the passport in mind, we should be wary of the critical tradition of arguing that *La Chartreuse*, as an episodic “roman de la grande route”, belongs to the genre of the picaresque (Bardèche 394–96). Unlike this genre, Stendhal’s novel is not set in a lawless space of open roads, but in historic-geographical surroundings where mobility is subject to restrictions and intense surveillance. While the picaresque novel relied in terms of narrative on the absence of effective movement control in early modern Europe, *La Chartreuse*, conversely, would be a very different work without the protagonist’s frequent clashes with the Austrian passport system.

However, in addition to these structural ramifications, the passport motif also has wider implications for our understanding of the novel and its relationship to the culture of the Restoration. Above all, this motif enables a new and

more complex appreciation the novel's political dimension. Although Balzac famously praised it as "*Le Prince moderne, le roman que Machiavel écrivait s'il vivait banni de l'Italie au XIX^e siècle*" (Stendhal 523), modern scholarship has tended to regard *La Chartreuse* as a more or less apolitical work. Thus, Pearson paraphrases it as "an after-dinner yarn about a duchess and her nephew" in which the protagonists play out "the eternal drama of a lover's triangle against a semi-anachronistic backdrop of pantomime princes and Renaissance skulduggery" (viii). Similarly, Victor Brombert describes Italy as portrayed in this novel as an "enchanted transalpine fairyland" (97), while Pierre-Louis Rey in a more recent study argues that its historical references are confined to the first five chapters, concluding that "une fois que Napoléon est défait, on va perdre pied avec la réalité. Les allusions précisément historiques seront désormais rarissimes et mineures" (25). As I have demonstrated, the latter statement in particular is far from hitting the mark. It is true that *La Chartreuse* has no direct correlative to the detailed chronicles of French political life in *Le Rouge et le Noir* (1830) and *Lucien Leuwen* (1834) and, further, that this novel's account of the ducal court of Parma has a certain operetta-like quality to it. Yet, by developing the storyline in close conjunction with a historically precise and pervasive rendition of the Austrian passport system, Stendhal calls attention to a different kind of politics centred on the practical exercise of power rather than on public opinion and the struggles between various ideological factions. It would be a mistake to dismiss this micropolitical dimension as somehow unworthy of our attention. For Stendhal, the passport system is the essence of political repression, and inasmuch as it launches a sustained attack on this system, *La Chartreuse* is not a Renaissance fantasy, but a historically grounded and highly political dissection of the Restoration-age police states.

Finally, the passport motif raises the question of Stendhal's strategy of representation in this novel. As Christopher Prendergast has shown, traditional accounts of mimesis from Hegel to Auerbach and Lukács are typically wedded to an idea of totality, claiming that true realism aims, not at exhausting the real, but capturing its inner logic (24–27). The representational approach implied by the passport motif is more modest; it is punctual rather than totalizing, using a concrete institution of this era to point synecdochally towards the authoritarianism of contemporary politics. However, the mimetic value of the passport motif does not simply reside in the historical accuracy of its depiction of the Austrian movement control regime. Rather, this motif should be seen an *interface* linking a specific political practice and a specific literary form. On the one hand, it ties in closely with a specific set of historical practices which the novel portrays with remarkable precision and detail. On the other hand, this reference to historical actualities is used dynamically as a way of articulating the novel's space, plot,

and themes. Understood in this way, the passport motif gives rise to a circular structure whereby concrete historical practices are processed and rearticulated as part of a novelistic narrative which as a result acquires the ability to respond to and critique these practices – not discursively, but via the individualized biography of the protagonist. In this sense, the Austrian passport system is more than a *context* that surrounds and determines the text, yet by definition remains external to it. This is precisely the wider importance of the preoccupation with passports in *La Chartreuse*: bridging the gap between text and context, it vividly and concretely exemplifies how historical situations operate *within* literature, not just as a background or an outside determinant, but as a productive force.

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