confession being the two most commonly encountered. Espionage in the postal system is raised throughout this book and would doubtless reward further examination. More than one chapter also suggests that histories of espionage should stop recounting anecdotes and evaluate structures instead. Yet I am not convinced that it would benefit early modern history as a discipline to neuter a topic well placed to interest a wider public, particularly as accurate analysis and the effective use of anecdote are not mutually exclusive.

Despite its title and external appearance, this book is predominately written in French rather than in English. The chapters by Bély, Desenclos, Hugon, Brunet, Micallef, Auer, and Félicite are French, and the remainder are in English.

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Translating Early Modern China: Illegible Cities. Carla Nappi.
Global Asias. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. x + 240 pp. $80.

In the preface of *Translating Early Modern China*, Carla Nappi writes an indispensable reading guide: originally intended to be a history book, the text evolved into a hybrid being, between scholarly and fictional writing, aimed at a wide audience of academics who do not fit into a single research category. It addresses not only experts in oriental languages and translation studies, but also those interested in a new approach to research. An unconventional beginning for what, of course, is an unconventional book.

The book is focused on primary sources concerning translations from/into Siamese, Mongolian, Manchu, Chinese, and Latin languages produced in Ming and Qing China, covering a time span ranging from 1389 to 1848; however, these texts, which are usually readable only by these languages' experts, are not the object of the book. The focus is, instead, a reflection on the process of translation itself. The book's approach is also unconventional compared to traditional translation studies: Nappi uses the rhetorical device of prosopopoeia—that is, letting the voices of interpreters come back from the past, trying to simulate their ideas behind the translation, and reconstructing the environment in which the texts came to life. This approach makes her book read, at times, more like a novel than a scholarly text.

Chapter after chapter, the reader is introduced to a multilingual China. First one enters the Ming court through the Interpreters' Station (*Huitong guan* 會同館) and the Translators' College (*Siyi guan* 四夷館), thus getting to know the work of the Siam Bureau translators during the sixteenth century, and the making of glossaries to aid new interpreters. The reader is then accompanied inside the Mongolian Bureau, traveling in time between the fourteenth and the early seventeenth centuries through the voices of the Mongolian compiler Qoninci and the Chinese Wang

Zilong 王子龍, which explain the documents of the *Hua Yi yiyu* 華夷譯語 (Sino-foreign vocabularies). Then, the reader is taken on a time travel into the Qing Dynasty, analyzing Manchu language studies through different actors: the Jesuit Ferdinand Verbiest (1623–88) with the Manchu-Latin grammar *Elementa Linguae Tartaricae*; the Manchu *Uge* (Wuge 舞格) and the Chinese *Cheng Mingyuan* 程明遠 with the 1730 Manchu manual *Qingwen qimeng* 清文啓蒙; and finally, in 1848, the Manchu-Chinese translator Bujilgen Jakdan and his poems, read with the help of his collaborator Hai Yu 海玉.

As implied by the book's subtitle—and also stated by the author herself—the inspiration behind the structuring of the text comes from the 1972 Italian novel *Le città invisibili* (Invisible cities) written by Italo Calvino (1923–85), a book whose reading can make many of the author's choices more understandable. First, because Nappi takes inspiration from it for the structuring of the chapters, and because Calvino himself staged a fictional dialogue in China between Marco Polo and Qubilai Khan, and finally, because Calvino said that his book was something like a last love poem to cities in an increasingly unlivable world. And just like Calvino, Nappi also composes a love poem for translation, bringing to light the processes of dialogue and understanding between languages and cultures, reconstructing those invisible cities made of words, which are almost like a message to overcome differences, remembering the cities made of encounters and conversations in multiple languages, beyond incommunicability and separation which today seem to rage. As the author writes in her preface, this book is a "work with primary sources to tell a story about the past that aims to inform how we think about the present and how we might make possible futures" (vii).

The author's goal is to strike and open up the debate, leaving much food for thought to the reader. In fact, if cities are a set of many things—memories, desires, signs of culture—so are translations, cities made up of many different elements but often analyzed only in the light of their finished aspect, while the complex structure and efforts behind them remain invisible. This book attempts to bring these aspects back to our attention.

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Accogliere e curare: Ospedali e culture delle nazioni nella Monarchia ispanica (secc. XVI–XVII). Elisa Novi Chavarria.
I libri di Viella 366. Rome: Viella, 2020. 210 pp. €25.

Over the last fifty years scholars have intensely studied medieval and early modern charity, healthcare, and social protection in the main urban centers of Southern Europe. Even the charitable institutions and confraternities of Naples and Palermo,