Edmondo de Amicis Travels East: *Cuore* in Japanese Translation and Adaptation

When Edmondo de Amicis published *Cuore* in 1886, Italian unification was a recent memory. Japan, too, had just emerged as a modern nation-state. The Meiji Restoration of 1868 saw the establishment of a parliamentary government and the waning of the feudal values that had previously held sway. Looking to Europe and North America as models of modernity, Japanese intellectuals educated themselves through foreign language learning, which resulted in a translation boom. The literary arts of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in particular can boast of many original and groundbreaking translations into Japanese. Children’s literature was also strongly influenced by foreign trends, especially within the context of a growing consciousness regarding the child’s important role in modern nation building. De Amicis’ “libro per i ragazzi,” an instant bestseller both at home and abroad, was a part of this wave of translations and has left a lasting mark on the Japanese imagination. Widely used as a language-learning text during the late 19th century, and eventually adapted into an *anime* (animated feature) in 1976, *Cuore* found a receptive audience in Japan, a place beyond even De Amicis’ own extensive travels.

This paper will examine how *Cuore* has been translated and received in Japan since the late 19th century, a period when the paths to and methods of translation were many and varied. In the target culture, what becomes of the author’s obvious concern with representing the diversity and unity of modern Italy in a way attractive to its young domestic readers? Since authorial intention and potential readership were radically changed in the target context, what was left of the text in its new iteration(s), and how was it used? The surprising answers to these complex and political questions may help explain the global popularity of *Cuore* in its time, and that of other world children’s literature “classics” as well.

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book, she is starting a new project on children’s literature and translation.