



Ico: Castle in the Mist

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When a boy named Ico grows long curved horns overnight, his fate has been sealed-he is to be sacrificed in the Castle in the Mist. But in the castle, Ico meets a young girl named Yorda imprisoned in its halls. Alone they will die, but together Ico and Yorda might just be able to defy their destinies and escape the magic of the castle.

Based on the video game filmmaker Guillermo del Toro (*Hellboy*, *Pan's Labyrinth*) called a "masterpiece", Japan's leading fantasist Miyuki Miyabe has crafted a tale of magic, loss, and love that will never be forgotten.

Ico: Castle in the Mist Details

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From Reader Review Ico: Castle in the Mist for online ebook

Jesse says

It is the novelization of a beloved video game, so there is some possibility that my joy in reading it is biased by my fond memories of the engaging mystery and emotion of the game. That being said, I think it would also be a great read for lovers of fantasy who have NOT played the game, even if they do not recognize the places and moments that conjure up game nostalgia for those who HAVE played it. The author takes some artistic liberty filling in gaps in the game world's story, but I am assured that she does so with the blessing of the game's creators - and everything written jives perfectly with my internal version of the game's backstory. I was concerned that removing the vaguery left by the writers would also dismantle much of the mystery, but to my pleasant surprise the mystery remains.

Franklin Teixeira says

Ico é um garoto que nasceu com um par de chifres. Isso significa que quando alcançar certa idade ele será oferecido para o Castelo na Névoa, uma fortaleza misteriosa que se alimenta de sacrifícios como ele. É lá que ele conhece Yorda, uma jovem prisioneira do castelo, e os dois buscam uma maneira de escapar de seus destinos cruéis.

Ico é originalmente um jogo de PlayStation 2, da visão do diretor Fumito Ueda. Miyuki Miyabe, uma das romancistas contemporâneas mais bem sucedidas no Japão, decidiu escrever um livro com sua interpretação pessoal da história, e o projeto acabou se tornando uma adaptação oficial.

O jogo deliberadamente não tinha muita história, o que permitia o jogador preencher as lacunas por si mesmo. E a própria Miyabe fez isso com maestria – ao invés de uma adaptação no sentido estrito, ela realizou uma verdadeira reimaginação, traduzindo uma experiência de mistério e isolamento em um excelente livro de fantasia, onde as trajetórias dos personagens funcionam como fachos de esperança em um mundo sombrio. Essa expansão não para no presente, pois o passado de Yorda também é explorado com uma quantidade fascinante de detalhes, contextualizando suas ações e a forma com ela lida com Ico.

A história tem um toque de conto de fadas que envolve disputas entre reinos e gerações, e explora uma série de temas como devoção, a idéia de sacrifício e a natureza do amor e da amizade. Escrito com carinho e talento e longe de ser uma adaptação barata, Ico é um prato cheio para qualquer fã de fantasia.

Thalia says

Ugh, deleting this one is really the hardest, because mine was the *first* review for this book on GoodReads.

Oh well. What must be done will be done.

Read the review on my blog:

<http://thaliasbooks.tumblr.com/post/9...>

Andrew says

I suppose I should write two reviews here: one for folks who love Ico the videogame, and one for folks who have never heard of it. (If you're in between, flip a coin and read both.)

Ico was a 2001 videogame (for the Playstation). I loved it; I still love it. It remains a landmark in atmospheric, engaging videogame storytelling. Notably, it was almost entirely wordless. Everything was conveyed through architecture, lighting, the body language of the protagonists, and -- most important -- the physical struggle of the game's challenges. If you haven't played the game, this makes no sense to you. Let me put forth that the most important button on the game's controller, the one about which the story revolves, is "hold hands".

So how does this experience translate into a novel?

A direct transcription of the game's events would be tedious and interminable. The author, sensibly, has expanded the story in several directions.

So: a young boy mulls his fate. Ico has horns on his head, sprouted on his thirteenth birthday, and that means he is to be taken off to the Castle in the Mist -- a sacrifice to its never-seen master. That much, we knew (more or less) from the game. But the book begins with the village elder, pondering his responsibility to send a student to an unknown doom. And then we meet Ico's best friend, and learn something about why the village has such a horrific custom. Quite a bit happens before the journey to the Castle itself (which is the game's first scene).

Once inside, the narrative hews closer to the game; enough so that readers might be put off by the focus on architecture, and all the scrambling Ico has to do through it. (Interactive fiction fans won't be a bit surprised.) But he soon discovers Yorda, a girl locked in an iron cage in the Castle's tower. Here the author takes her strongest liberty. In the original game, Yorda was seen only from the outside. She does not speak Ico's language; he does not even learn her name for a good fraction of the game. She is not passive, but she is part of the story's enigma.

The book, in contrast, freely switches to her viewpoint. When she and Ico join hands, he gets flashes of her memory -- more of the story's background than the game ever gave us. Parts of the Castle gain unexpected depth and history. And then we move entirely to Yorda's frame. The middle third of the book is entirely her narration, showing us (though not Ico) her childhood in a Castle full of courtiers, scholars, tournaments, and secrets. I found this the most compelling part of the book, no doubt because it was entirely new to me.

(I would be willing to describe it as Yorda's book, with an unusually broad frame story from Ico's viewpoint. Okay, except that the beginning has the elder and the buddy kid also. The structure is hard to get a grip on, honestly.)

Eventually we reach the end of Yorda's episode, and return to Ico -- blithely ignorant of the last 125 pages of narration, and therefore no longer quite our protagonist. He's still the go-clobber-the-baddie sort of character we expect from the game, and so the story wraps up.

The author's interpretation of what's going on is rather different from what the game presents. Thus, her

ending diverges as well. Which is fine; I can replay the game any time I want. The tang of familiarity is in the sunlight, the sound of the sea -- the rhythm of two children running along a parapet, holding hands.

And for the reader who never played the game? I can't give you a completely fresh viewpoint; I know the game too well. But I was startled, halfway through the book, by the realization that I was reading an unabashed fairy tale. It's a form that written fantasy (at least, published English-language fantasy) has largely abandoned. We seem to prefer either added grit or the "urban" grounding of the modern world. *Ico* has an ethereal princess, a sturdy village boy, a curse, a castle, and an evil witch-queen; stir well and swallow in a gulp. There's nothing ironic or fractured about any of it. (Not that I mind those directions either -- halfway through the first season of *Once Upon a Time* right now, thanks.)

The language is a bit weak, prone to fantasy-conventionality and (as I said) too much physical description. (The text is Japanese, translated to English.) Nonetheless: engaging, moving -- if you're willing to buy into fairy tales -- and a fine addition to the *Ico* universe.

(No, I don't see anything on the net to indicate she's working on *Shadow of the Colossus*. I'd read it, though.)

Nedda says

?? - ???

*a story of an unknown place,
.. told in an unknown age.*

I haven't played the game, but I still loved this beautiful book, gorgeous descriptions and characterizations
~<3

J says

Hands down the best video game novelization, I have ever encountered. Really tempted to give it a five star but I try to reserve that for works that alter my perceptions or strike me in a really profound way.

Having never played the actual game, I can't attest to the similarities or the connections between the two. The novel focuses primarily on a young boy who is sent as a sacrifice to a castle surrounded in mist. There is a great deal of mystery and a plethora of unknowns working behind the curtain that will keep a reader turning pages through to the end. What's up with the boy's horns? What's up with the castle? Why so much fear and the sacrifices? These are answered and even followed by more mystery and questions, but all revealed by the end with excellent pacing and positioning.

This book was written in Japanese and translated into English, but I found no difficulty or detected no

struggle in the transition process. The prose felt very clean and even soothing in its relative simplicity. The perspective shifts that occur at times might feel a little shocking or entirely unwanted at the moment, but really feel necessary as the story unfolds.

Highly enjoyable, simple enough that anyone who can handle some mild emotional waves and/or a touch of violence and death can enjoy it, and fresh in a very cliché atmosphere.

4 stars: Fun, Relaxing, and Memorable.

Rachel says

The story starts out fairly interesting, filling in Ico's backstory and taking him through the castle. Eventually it switches to Yorda to cover a lot of the same castle wandering material, with flashbacks to her backstory. And it drags. And drags. Finally I realized I didn't really care to finish this story.

Melissa says

This book was not for me. The first half was incredibly dull. The second half picked up but.. even when it was interesting I was still bored. I think it's probably a great puzzle/exploration game. But as a novel.. not my jam.

Jamie Galea says

ICO is a Playstation2 game that's revered for being one of the most beautifully minimalistic games ever made. It's haunting and moving in a way most games aren't. While Alexander O. Smith's translation is technically great, Miyuki's adaptation just doesn't work out so well. Half of this book is backstory to the events of the game, and just doesn't work.

Granted, it needs to be there because it'd be a much shorter book otherwise, but it comes across as plodding.

MC says

Ico: Castle in the Mist is a novelization based upon the video game from a decade or so back. The story follows the plight of a boy who is born with horns on his head. As a horned child, he is a "Sacrifice" to the power residing in the Castle in the Mist. All that is really known about the Castle is that some dark god or other entity lives there that must be appeased by sending the boys and girls born with horns on their head to stay there once they reach a certain age.

The story here is about the eponymous horned child, Ico, who is actually not like the other sacrifices. You see, the fabled *Book of Light*, holy text of the Creator, the Sun God, has been found, signifying that Ico has

been chosen to end the plot by the Dark God and his minion who resides in the Castle in the Mist.

To this end, the village Elder and his wife, who are Ico's adoptive parents as by custom the village elder raises the Sacrifices, prepare a special shirt for him called a "Mark". The Mark is always worn by the sacrifice, but this one is different. It is designed to aid Ico, the chosen of the Creator, in his quest.

Unfortunately for Ico, he is on his own. After he is trapped in a sarcophagus to die as appeasement for the Castle, his Mark activates, freeing him from the tomb. As the boy investigates, he finds a girl who he learns is named Yorda. For some strange reason, he feels a great deal of protectiveness towards her, and resolves to escape the castle with her. To do this, he must not only defeat the evil forces in the Castle, but must face *extremely* painful truths about his people, his new friend Yorda, and the bonds between the girl and his ancestors.

Usually one would be justified for being skeptical of an adaptation of a video game. Such things usually have not had a very good history of being done well. The problem is usually that the author can not get correct the feel of the game. When you have something that is so subjective as how individuals respond to an interactive video game, then you can't really please people typically. Yet if what I have read is true, the author here, Miyki Miyabe, actually pulled this off.

I appreciated how the author managed to both communicate some complex ideas about truth and lies, betrayal by one's leaders or religious leaders, so on, on the one hand; but yet was firmly idealistic on the other hand. So many writers either have idealism, or tough issues discussed. Either no problems, or overly-done angst. Miyabe managed to find a good middle ground.

The story was a classic good versus evil type of tale, with a divinely chosen warrior facing off against an immense evil power. Though this was a more dualistic type of narrative - albeit one with the Creator stronger than his antithesis - it still had both a foregone conclusion, while keeping suspense. The Creator helped his chosen servant, but also arguably gave much liberty and free will to the Ico. This wasn't easy, but one where good won very naturally, nonetheless.

Authors of Christian fiction could look to this for inspiration on how to have the All-Powerful God analogue, and still suspense. In other words, this is like real life. God is real, and He helps us a great deal. Somehow, however, our own free will comes into play in our struggles. How does this work? How does the interplay occur between the Sovereign will of Providence and our desires and free choices? As author Randy Alcorn has observed, we might never know. But we can be sure they both are at play, for our Father tells us they are so in His Word.

This story was terrific for the first quarter or so, and then it dragged at some points until the half way point, where it picked up again. This was largely because the narrative stalled a bit to handle the chronicle of Ico and Yorda making their way through the early traps and pathways. This *IS*, as I said, based on a video game, and this is the weak point. If you can get through that slump, and I encourage you to do so, you will really enjoy the book.

Some might be upset that I harp on this theme so much, but I really enjoy this element to an epic story. This is the concept of self-sacrifice. Do you take the easy way out and try to survive, or avoid other conflicts? Or do you take risks to do the right thing for others? Often when these questions come up in real life, they can vary widely in seriousness between some minor issue to a life and death one. The easy, selfish part is called "easy" for a reason. The self-sacrificial choice is a hard one. It is one that Christ calls us to, in copying him. As He commands (and encourages us) we lose our lives (or otherwise suffer) to gain life and glory in

Heaven. If we are selfish, our reward is far less. What makes more sense to you?

I really enjoyed this story, and the ideas of facing up to hard truths, choosing to do the right things, so on. I recommend it strongly.

Rachel says

I really enjoyed this book. I knew before reading it that it was based on a video game, but I've never played it. I think the story in this book was very successful, but I had some problems with the way it was constructed.

The beginning, for me, was the best part. The writing was wonderful and as Ico's backstory was filled in the character was really coming alive for me.

In the middle, it started to be much less organic. Here you could tell that the book was based on a video game. Every scene seemed like a video game puzzle with one difficult, but convenient solution, all the action seemed a little too contrived, and the "exploration" was on rails going one direction.

Soon, the book changed to be from the perspective of Ico's companion, Yorda. At this point I started to have major problems with the structure. Yorda's perspective took up almost all of the remaining book and her backstory was presented as her remembering rather than Ico figuring out. This made Yorda the focus rather than Ico and by the end, I was wondering whether the book should have been titled Yorda: Castle of the Mist instead.

There was one major plot twist that was delivered in a big villain monologue which broke the tension and it wasn't much of a twist to begin with. Instead of acting unpredictably based on the twist, Ico followed the rails and the book concluded with a scripted boss battle and a final cut scene.

I ended the novel feeling a little disappointed. The story had a lot of potential that I don't think this book took advantage of. Despite these problems, it's an enjoyable read.

pearl says

This could be so good, or so, so bad.

Actually it could be "meh", but I'm not even considering it at this point. Rise up with dignity or go down in flames, I say.

Konstantina_pap says

Read review at: <http://thereadingarmchair.blogspot.gr...>

This is definitely one of the most special book cases I've encountered so far. In case you didn't recognise this cover, this is a book adaptation of the PlayStation 2 game ICO. I am aware that this is a popular game and there definitely will be some who have actually played it (and loved it). But there also will be some of you

who haven't even heard about it. Having said that this book was a must for me as well as for the video games to books challenge, being an ICO adaptation. I would even gladly read a Shadow of the Colossus adaptation, and even one of the most recent one The Last Guardian. Yes, this team creates interesting games, with touching stories that in the hands of skillful writers can become great books. Having said all that, ICO - Castle in the Mist lives up to the expectations that this video game has set.

Ico is a young boy, who is unlucky enough to be born with horns in his head. This means that he a sacrifice and in a certain age he has to go to the Castle in the Mist, never to leave again. Nobody knows what happens to the sacrifices there, not even anyone wants to talk about it. So, Ico is resigned to his fate and goes to this castle. There he meets a mysterious girl, Yorda, who is also trapped in this castle. Every time she touches the young boy he sees images of times long gone, and bit by bit the story of the forbidding castle is revealed. The only way for Ico and Yorda to survive is to trust each other and cooperate. But will they be able to win the Queen and lift the curse from the Castle in the Mist?

Just from this description it's plain to see the plot of this book is that of a pure fantasy novel. It's a battle against evil. It really has all the elements that makes such a story great. A young protagonist who can't really understand what is happening to him, another young protagonist who really tries to break free from the evil that has bind her all those years, it has visions of the past, it has a menacing villain and her minions, it has the discovery of a long forgotten book which describes the way that the curse can be lifted, it even has the death of a dear friend.

But what does this novel actually add to the story, if you've played the video game before? Well, for one it's interesting to see the two different points of view. In the first and the last chapter we follow Ico. In this way, we learn what he feels and we learn what he thinks. This is a big deal, as in the game he doesn't use any actual words. We get his backstory and so we feel about him. ICO - Castle in the Mist doesn't begin from that dark room in the castle as in the video game. It rather begins on the village where Ico grew up. There is also a very interesting chapter from Yorda's point of view. She has a flashback where all of her memories come back to her and we learn everything about the Queen and her pact with the Dark God.

The ending doesn't change at all from the video game. It all ends in the beach where Ico meets Yorda again. I liked it very much. It leaves room for hope and I can't help guessing what they would have done. Would Ico return to Toksa village with Yorda? Could he restore the horned-men's reputation? I could almost see the possibility of a sequel here.

The other thing that I really liked in this version of the story is the description of the places. Having seen them before, it was natural to expect them to be described in some way. Miyuki Miyabe managed to bring all of the familiar sceneries with great detail. But it was never tiring. When the language tends to be descriptive I normally lose my interest, but this isn't the case with ICO - Castle in the Mist. The language is indeed descriptive in this book, but somehow it's full of tension and I couldn't put it down. Plus, what the castle really does is add more elements to the epic atmosphere.

The thing that was a little lacking in this novel was actually the one that I never imagined it would. I'm talking about the action. There were time when Yorda was in danger by those mysterious creatures-minions, but Ico always found a way to fight them easily. The final battle with the Queen felt rash. It was like Ico followed a predestined root, the kind you'd expect a player would follow after watching a walkthrough video.

Also, one of the things that made ICO such a unique game was the holding of the hands. You literary run around this castle with Yorda holding hands! In this novel, this wasn't the case. I mean, of course there were

moments that they held their hands, but it was only used when Ico needed to see a vision from the past, and just then.

Overall, Ico - Castle in the Mist is a great adaptation. It's a fantasy novel at its roots and it doesn't disappoint. This is a rare case for books that come from video games, and it certainly can be read by anyone. Even if you haven't heard of this video game before but you like fantasy then you're going to love it!

Leslie says

When Miyuki Miyabe comes to ICO she writes a world she has made her own. As she states in "Preface," given "free reign with the story and world found in the game" by the producers and creators, she found her "own path through the tale." She uses and develops elements and characters, but "the order of events, the solutions to puzzles, even the layout of the castle have changed." The designated status as novelization honors the originators of her inspiration, but make no mistake that Miyabe lends the story a heart and a craftsmanship that is all her own.

A story of an unknown place, / Told in an unknown age. (epigraph).

The time had come for Toksa Village to offer its sacrifice to the Castle in the Mist. It had been their misfortune to have a horned child born into their midst years earlier. "The loom had fallen silent," the first line of the story reads. The silence of it is noticeable to the elder of the village even as the darkness in the tone of Miyabe's tale begins to settle. This is no story of a people fully convinced in a duty that was established many long years before. A terrible fear is made apparent even as the reasons why they should fear are not. The Castle is a bogeyman in a lot of ways, a scary unknown that lingers in the customs and lore of the villagers. Even as Miyabe crafts a world with enviable fluidity, she infuses the story with a simultaneity of dread and eagerness for that unknown: the Castle in the Mist.

I adore the sort of tale that throws you straight in and erects the world around you as the world itself continues forward in its dilemma. Miyabe moves through characters and time with an organic sense of story, establishing the mystery the rest of the books sets out to uncover: What is the Castle in the Mist and why does it demand a sacrifice? And what role does Ico really play in a story so steeped in religious and magical aspect?

Ico, born of a normal village household, differs from the others of Toksa in more than existence of his horns: he does not fall ill, heals quickly, is fast and strong and agile. He is considered soulless (as if it already belongs to a god), yet is depicted clearer of heart. Ico is sweet without being cloying. A good hero who in his youth loves and is loved; which makes the loom cease beneath the hands of a distraught foster mother; which makes an eager friend (Toto) become one of the better story devices I've seen.

Miyabe is very skilled at setting up plausible situations for later. Knowing that ICO finds inspiration from a video game, it was difficult to read this without having aspects of a game in mind and so I read many instances as if they were a game world's tutorials. A situation met/explored on an easier level so as to be ready when things become increasingly difficult, and Miyabe does take the ICO to some very tricky levels. She diligently avoids misuse of myth or mysticism for the sake of ease. She puts the solutions herein, we just have to recognize them, just as Ico must.

From the very beginning, clear notions and directives on right and wrong become confused; the popular logic

subverted with Toto and our first taste of real destiny. And we could expect nothing else as Miyabe seats her novel in a sign of a rebellious spirit written into the very first sentence. I'm out of my depth with Japanese myth perspectives,* but Ico undermines the traditional image of a horned character for western cultural readers. ICO moves on to muddy the absolutism of Light and Dark. And relationships are not left to the skeletal forms of (world constructed) expectation. Perhaps the true distress experienced in the novel is deciding which position/perspective to support—in this we have plenty of avatars at our disposal.

Ico dreams of her before he happens upon her, the girl in the iron birdcage, our deuteragonist. He is enthralled, taken with the desire to rescue her even as he doesn't understand her or the troubles she will cause him. She is like a key, unwittingly sharing her memories with him, able to open closed pathways. She is called Yorda. Like the game, the shades are determined to recapture her and Ico has to mind the fragile figure of her; which is a bit frustrating. Already ICO tests (and will continue to test) the pacing with its topographical challenges as Ico traverses the labyrinthine Castle. True to gaming form, there are puzzles and even tasks in the novel's questing. And true to said form, ICO is building notions into the greater structure of the story. The Castle and her contents becomes more a character, though hardly illuminated and progressively more sinister in both its revelations and obfuscations. Yorda is much the same in characterization.

I was invested in the read by the arrival of "Chapter 3: The Cage of Time," but I'm pretty sure I held my breath many times after—I think it helps me read faster. We move to Yorda's point-of-view and the doll-like figure wakes. Miyabe overlays sequences with a deft pen. That organic movement in time and story returns to focus and we are given new fascinations in Yorda, her parents, and Ozuma (to name a few). Yorda was a puzzle before, but what the hell!

Miyabe makes Yorda make sense. She is the maiden to her witch mother. That she is beautiful creates an allure that is not necessarily typical. She captivates, and it is an understated power. Where her mother holds power by inciting fear, Yorda wields a vulnerability that one wants to exploit or rescue but always underestimates. Yorda is a play on how we perceive the vulnerable and how we mistake the interchange of beautiful, lithe female as delicate versus the psychological complexities of her situation as Yorda. She is claimed by both her father's and mother's blood; one Light (goodness) and the other Dark (destruction). And when she is good, she is destructive. Yorda's dilemma is rich and wrenching.

[!! potential spoiler] It is vital for Yorda to be her father's daughter, because that means she has an option to be someone other than her mother. Yet in order to be good, does she not need to be the loving (aka dutiful?) daughter to her mother? Can she still be good if she had not failed to destroy her mother? [spoiler end !!]

Ozuma, Ico's horned ancestor, is also a story who is rich and wrenching. And the Queen...if only she were not the only villain, but as the primary sense of torment, she gave me the chills. The Queen is as effective in inflicting wounds with truth as she is with lies. Everything about and within the Castle is her descriptor, as intended, but with perhaps more attention than we spare; especially when we find ourselves not ascribing upon her as much detail as we could, the Tower of the Wind, for one (oh, the symbolism, the attributions, and the implications). As it is she appears truly unstoppable.

So many great heroes came before Ico, with power outside of luck, foreknowledge beyond wits, and yet it is Ico who would be great. When Ozuma talks about the horned ones, their creator and purpose, we are more deeply saddened by the sacrificial system, but we are also offered hope. Ico is perceptive and self-determining, those are his most rewarding/rewarded traits; telling for a novel investigating the systems of control and those who dare push against their boundaries, let alone break free of them...

recommendations: ICO intends to induce horror in various fashions, so I'd recommend 13&up with the understanding that this is not just a book for teens or young adults; in fact, some of the depth of the morality questions may not ping with too young readers. For those who love good fantasy, dark lore, adventure, and/or gaming sensibilities.

of note: Ursula K. LeGuin's short story "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" came swiftly to mind with ICO and it never really left me; in a nice way. The cover of the edition I read is the same cover used for the PS2 game for European and Japanese distribution, "painted by director Fumito Ueda and inspired by Giorgio de Chirico's The Nostalgia of the Infinite" (wikipedia "Ico"). The second image is a 2008 reprinting poster of an edition cover illustrated by neonvision.

*I skimmed a google search yield of Oni (?).

~L (omphaloskepsis)

<http://contemplatrix.wordpress.com/20...>

Anna Hepworth says

Very pretty story, lush language and detailed set pieces. However, given that it is a novelisation of a computer game, the pacing is just a bit odd.

Taralen says

Ico: Castle in the Mist is an interesting though mostly bland take on the artful PS2 game **ICO**. If I were to read this book prior to playing the game, I think I would have bumped up my rating from 2 stars to 3. Indeed, as a stand-alone novel, it is a fairly decent read. Miyuki Miyabe does a rather good job at filling in details and questions the reader may be wondering. The problem, however, is that the author completely *misses* the point of Fumito Ueda's minimalistic story and setting of **ICO**.

While the background lore is rather well thought-out, though cliché at times, it takes away something that the mysteriousness of **ICO** has. Miyabe includes a lot of dialogue that the game lacks. She shows what happens to the castle and its history through flashbacks that spontaneously occur whenever Ico takes Yorda, the heroine's, hand. This is used as a means for Miyabe to fill in the otherwise wordless relationship Ico and Yorda share in the game. There is something, however, disappointing with the fact that so much dialogue is exchanged at all. It is something of beauty that two individuals with no verbal means of communicating with each other can create a bond as strong as they do in the game. In a way, their speechless friendship made their companionship extremely touching and beautiful.

The slew of dialogue and background material seem to convolute the story and fails to give the reader a sense of loneliness that the game does. Monsters that are otherwise left as a mystery for the audience to speculate upon are given dialogue and a defined background in the novel, adding to the problem. In the game, because of how empty it is and Yorda's inability to communicate with Ico, the gamer is given a sense of isolation that the book fails to deliver. Instead it comes off being a complicated mess of flashbacks and ghosts. There are times when the flashbacks leave you to interpret more when they happen, but Ico usually concludes what happened almost immediately after--ruining the suspense. Another problem is the fact there

are so many internalized thoughts in places that clearly don't need them. At times I felt like telling the book "I GET IT, MOVE ON PLEASE". All of these problems combine just ultimately make me enjoy the simplicity of the game more than the mess of stuff she tried to do with Ueda's characters and setting.

But how does the book hold up on its own without the game in question? Alone it is, as stated earlier, decent. It's clear Miyabe wanted this to be more of a High Fantasy flair through her ideas of knights and feudal-like descriptions. Unfortunately the weak story-telling plot device through Yorda's flashback powers feel forced, like she wasn't able to come up with any other way of telling the story. One thing Miyabe does rather well is blurring the lines of good and evil. . . Until the ending. Near the end we see a collapse of this where the queen, who she otherwise tries to paint as gray, pretty much is painted black faster than it's built up that she's something more than a heartless villain. There are a handful of minor plot holes and glaring inaccuracies. For example, the sacrifices in the novel are always called "brothers" or some such masculine noun. Then at one point we are given a hint there were females, but they are still referred to as brothers there after. I'm not sure if this is a translation error, but there are small inaccuracies like this throughout the book. These, however, do not impede the story too terribly. Her actual method of writing is something I'm not sure I can comment on, given this is a translation. However, there are times where she uses cliches such as "Let sleeping dogs lay" that can raise a brow due to how out-of-place they feel. At times the dialogue doesn't feel like anything a real person would say, which could make it difficult to take these parts seriously.

If you're a fan of the simplicity that the game has to offer, I would avoid this book at all costs. If you want to read it anyway, you'd have to seriously set aside whatever thoughts you had for the game and try to read it as a stand-alone. Needless to say, it won't be easy.

If you don't like the simplicity of the game then this adaption might serve to be a decent alternative that at least gives you a rather solid, though somewhat average, fantasy story of light and darkness.

Chris says

While many gamers love to talk about story in videogames, you have to remember that they are often told better in summary format. The gameplay, exploration, puzzle solving, and combat will take up the majority of the time. There's really not that much going on story-wise. This is also how the original Ico was. Many gamers grew to love the game based on the aesthetics, mood, puzzle solving, and the bond that you feel with the Yorda character. The game focused on making you feel connected with a mute character, escorting her through the dangers of the castle. To increase the feeling of connectedness, the game even had you hold the shoulder button down whenever you head to lead her around by holding her hand. With the exception of what was best read about in an FAQ in regards to what happened before and at the end of the game, that was it for story and dialog.

Ico: Castle in the Mist aims to "fix" this. It ends up feeling like a mix of filler and fanfiction.

The beginning focuses on the boy named Ico, a chosen child that's strong but naive. He ends up rather typical, doesn't challenge authority, and rolls with the punches. It ends up rather boring. The beginning also focuses on the character Toto, new to the book, feels like he's been wedged into the story.

At a certain point in the book, the viewpoint switches to Yorda as she has a very long flashback, giving you the beginning of her story. This is rather interesting, since you don't know anything at all from playing the game in regards to how she was as a child, although it eventually ends up sacrificing the mysterious feeling

this character has and eventually she and the main character Ico begin to be able to communicate. It all feels rather messy.

I like some of the ideas this book had in attempting to give Ico enough story to fill a book, but it felt dry in some spots and meandering in others. I don't see how a non-fan of the game could ever care about this and even as a fan, I didn't really like it.

Felicia says

This book is odd.

It's not the video game plus+ dialogue and character development minus- parts that are fun to play but would be boring to read. It's a retelling of the story.

The first chapter is Ico's back-story, which is fine but drags on a bit too long. In the second chapter it starts getting really strange because the author starts going through the story almost exactly the way the game happens. I could actually imagine her playing the game with her laptop by her side, writing as she played. Then we slip into Yorda's perspective and we get her back-story, which I didn't care for. I have to admit during this chapter I felt like the book was fan-fiction that I could read online for free.

After the second chapter the book doesn't really get back on track with the game's story-line until the very end, at which point I had really lost interest.

It's impossible to read the book and not compare it to the game. Part of what makes the game so interesting is that you don't understand what's going on with Yorda. You feel a bond between Ico and Yorda that the two character's lack the ability to express with words.

(view spoiler)

Nunie says

I went in this book completely blind. It was interesting but I could feel how it was a game after some point. The story was quite engaging and I would have loved to learn more of this universe. This is something I reproach to this book, to not dig deeper. It stays on the surface, close to what – as I learned later – is the story line of the game but it would have deserved more, so much more.

Timothy Warner says

The world in which this novel is written is grand and intricate compared to the (unforgettable) video game on which it was based. It far accedes the plot of the game, if there really even was one, so much so that it honestly can become unbearably dreary at times.

In this novel we are introduced to many new characters inside and outside of the Castle In The Mist, and even towns not mentioned in the game. This starts out wonderfully with the first (of only four) long chapter(s). We learn of the world and town our protagonist inhabits. The story builds nicely as it brings us to the Castle.

Many parts of the book are, when it comes right down to it, more or less descriptions of what you see while playing the actual game. This can seem a bit tedious at times; describing the environment in ways that you

would need only know if you yourself had to interact with them. For the most part these unnecessarily descriptive segments are far and few between compared to the vast amount of imaginative story telling outside the realm of the game itself. In fact there are even a few changes made to things that are in the game, and further information is created on certain enigmas found in the game.

For a large part of the book we find ourselves learning plenty of history on everything the author has created herself, and on Yorda. It is almost a book within a book. This had its ups and downs, but I feel went on for too long.

What I began to realized before beginning the last chapter was that the thing preventing me from enjoying the book like I really wanted to was my inability to relate to any of the characters. I could admire Ico, but he only occupies so much of the book. Without feeling any bond to the characters, this stories only hope is character relationships with each other, and of course conflict and tragedy.

All in all I feel the book was good; the story was good, but was over loaded with drags that didn't have quite enough emotional draw-in to make up for it.
