

Indiscretion

Hannah Fielding

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The romance of the Spanish countryside wars with the practicality of England in this romance set in the 1950s.

A large volume, rife with romanticized descriptions of Spain, Hannah Fielding's *Indiscretion* traces the relationship of Salvador de Rueda and Alexandra de Falla.

Alexandra, born of an English mother and a Spanish father, decides to return to her father's ancestral home in Spain to confront the family that has long ignored her. Her grandmother, the Spanish matriarch, demands complete obedience from the family, including her would-be successor, Salvador. The family chafes at her rules, particularly Alexandra, who has enjoyed independence in England as a result of her career as a romance novelist and the changing social mores of postwar England. While the UK was finding its feet, Spain was still reeling, trying to recover its financial footing. Old customs die hard, and Alexandra finds herself fighting against Salvador's perception of honor as the two engage in a dance of approach avoidance, one moment passionately embracing, the next spurning each other and creating elaborate plans to make the other jealous.

The characters become stand-ins for their countries in many ways. Salvador is a parody of the Spanish man; he speaks often of Spanish passion, attributing most of his character traits to his nationality. Alexandra acts similarly; when she is rational, she is English, and when she is passionate and impulsive, she is acting on her Spanish heritage.

Fielding creates a number of obstacles for the pair, from a spurned Gypsy lover to a former fiancée to a bullfighter with dark predilections. Fielding's romanticized view of Spain pervades the book. In some instances, it helps her to embellish the setting with intensity and vitality; in other cases, Spain, its people, and its lifestyles become cliché.

The book does have the sweep of an epic, engaging a long family history and a vibrant culture and moment in world history. Many readers will be more than forgiving of the stereotypes because the novel will give them transport to a different time and place.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (Spring 2015)

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