



Conditions of Faith

Alex Miller

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""There is a moment in our lives when we must decide which world we belong to. The world of our dreams or the other one. We can't all drift back and forth between them without risking losing our place in both.""
From one of Australia's most revered contemporary authors comes the romantic saga of Emily Stanton and her restless struggle against the conventions of her time.

When Alex Miller's mother died several years ago, she left him the fragmentary journal she'd kept while living briefly in Paris as a young woman in the 1920s. Inspired by this surprising entree into his mother's emotional life and her conflicted passions of young womanhood, Miller has written "Conditions of Faith." In spare, precise prose, Miller brings us into vivid 1920s Australia, France, and Tunisia and gives us a taste of feminism at the beginning of the century through the story of Emily Stanton. Like Henry James's Isabel Archer before her, Emily is beautiful and headstrong, restless, idealistic, and determined to live a fulfilling life despite smothering social conventions.

It's 1923 and at age twenty-five, Emily, an Australian, impulsively marries Georges Elder, a French-Scottish engineer ten years her senior. Suddenly she is propelled from Melbourne, where she is a promising scholar of classical civilizations, to Georges's small, conventional flat in Paris. Quickly dismayed at the traditional life she has married into, Emily resolves to look elsewhere for the exotic adventure and intellectual stimulation she believes to be her due. She will "live a Parisian fairy story," she determines, which suits her until it leads to an illicit liaison and unwanted pregnancy, altering her life irrevocably. At the center of the book is "the problem of a reason for living," a problem that society says should be solved, for women, by motherhood. For Emily, though, it's not sufficient. Her search for fulfillment will take her as far as the ruins of Carthage and ultimately challenge society's most deeply cherished beliefs about motherhood and family. "Conditions of Faith" is at once a provocative romance and an elegant meditation on a timeless dilemma.

Conditions of Faith Details

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From Reader Review Conditions of Faith for online ebook

Bialey says

3 1/2 stars. Another captivating novel by Alex Miller.

Laura Holland says

Pretty dark novel. I really thought the main characters were very self-centered so I had a hard time liking them. It's all about doing what you want, not what's best for another.

Glen Baum says

The best of Alex Miller, loved it.

Happy says

I love reading Alex Miller's work and this was no different. It was excellent. Emily, the main character annoyed me as most of Alex's females leading ladies do, always a good sign (for me) of a great story.

Chiuho says

I enjoyed the story very much. It presents the complication, doubts and emotions, struggles of life with remarkable courages. I think it's well crafted and beautiful written. LIfe goes on, after the book has been closed, the story lingers.

Strivetoengage says

I posted my review of this book on my blog: [https://strivetoengage.wordpress.com/...](https://strivetoengage.wordpress.com/)

SWC says

I chose the author based upon a review I read for a book by Steven Carroll. Both are Australian. I found that I was confused on how the meeting between Emily and the priest had an affect as the story continued to develop. An entertaining story which contained a diverse range of topics.

Edward says

Why are we here? What is our purpose? What do we want to accomplish? These are the questions that a 25 year old woman from Melbourne in Australia tackles in 1923. They are the same questions that we think about today. She has the same complications in her life that many have today. It is a very good novel written really well addressing issues of life. The period in which it is written is interesting and most of it takes place in Paris after the young woman leaves Melbourne. It is her visit to Tunisia that seals her fate.

Carinya Kappler says

“Conditions of Faith” is a beautifully crafted narrative set in the 1920s in Australia, Europe and sultry mysterious North Africa. Although the story itself is fascinating, well researched, technically convincing, romantic and inviting, I believe it is merely the vehicle driving a much more formidable social and political message.

Within the varied confines of many cultures and both genders lie the boundaries (often unspoken) of ambition, family and racial loyalty, duty and self love.

This book completes an uncomfortable exploration of those eternal struggles suffered by those brilliant but restless spirits who seek self fulfilment regardless of the cost.

When does the end not justify the means? What sacrifice is necessary or forgivable so that one’s life’s ambition can be realised?

The author explores many facets of this bitter struggle to find oneself. He presents a plethora of internal and external battles in an attempt to teach the reader how to view these divisive issues sympathetically through the eyes of the characters involved.

He presents three of his major characters, Emily, Georges and Hakim as crusaders, prisoners of their own longing to conquer new territories. These driven individuals also possess a burning desire to communicate and justify the many sacrifices they have made at their own and others expense. The author uses the parallel of the historical journal of Perpetua bridging time and understanding with the current day journal of Emily to her daughter. He may even be suggesting that this epic daily letter in some way compensates for the daughter’s loss of her mother?

This is a wonderful book – highly recommended.

Carinya

Norah says

Really enjoyed this book - quite un-put-downable! Award-winning author Alex Miller uses a sensitive touch to explore deep issues of the mind, heart, and spirit in *Conditions of Faith*, a thoughtful novel about a young Australian woman in the 1920s who longs to discover her purpose for living. After finishing school, 24-year-old Emily Stanton's life is adrift. When Georges Elder, representing his Parisian firm, comes to Melbourne to consult with Emily's father about building a bridge in Sydney Harbor, he is enchanted with Emily and proposes. Emily makes a hasty decision to marry him and leave her family for a new life in Paris. When her decision fails to bring her contentment, she quickly succumbs to a chance affair with a priest, the implications of which reverberate throughout the rest of the story. Miller slowly brings into focus Emily's

wrestling with her life--her sexuality, her spirituality, her ability to enter into motherhood wholeheartedly, and her desire to bring to fruition the life of the mind. He sets his tale against the backdrops of Australia, France, and Tunisia, and uses colors, sounds, and fragrances that will astonish the reader with their vividness and clarity. Although Emily's final choices may dismay some readers, her desire to fully embrace her life will resonate with any woman who has ever yearned to discover herself.

Liz says

put-upon white woman explores sexuality, becomes messiah figure to exotic people, saves exotic culture

S says

Plodding, pointless, waste of time.

Stef says

This is my third read of CoF within a span of 1,5 years and once again I couldn't put this book down. The writing is so beautifully prosaic, it pulls you into the story from page 1. Emily is so very relatable in her quest to find herself while trying to navigate the pressures society puts upon her, it's always a joy to reconnect with her.

John Agnew says

Took me a while to get into it, but great writing and a distinctive dilemma.

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