

## **Biting the Moon: A Memoir of Feminism and Motherhood**

Joanne S. Frye  
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REVIEWED BY MAYA E. BHAVE

Reading Joanne Frye's memoir, *Biting the Moon: A Memoir of Feminism and Motherhood*, is akin to peering through a glass window into someone's soul, and leaving wondering if we should have lingered so long. Frye examines her multi-layered, and often conflicting social roles as wife, divorcee and single-mother, exploring what she calls the "detritus of her former life" (47), whilst wrestling to connect her political and personal spheres. She opens the memoir recounting the early months after her ex-husband's suicide, but frames the rest of her piece chronologically, recalling the early days of their marriage and life as parents to two daughters. She documents her life as a doctoral student with a young toddler underfoot, noting she "was unable to carve out real writing time" (53). Yet her problems don't end there, as she struggles with existential questions related to finishing her degree, finding time for herself and ways to connect to her wider social community. She desperately wants to figure out how to reconcile being a wife and independent woman, as these divergent roles vex her and leave her emphatically stating, "it was as a wife, not as a mother, that I felt entrapped," (58). In a similar vein, after her divorce she states, "I am not certain who I am" (120), yet notes she had chosen to make a life of "these conflicting pieces" (172).

Four things thankfully save Frye from utter despair: her two children (Kara and Adriane), her writing and teaching. She recaps warm, intimate stories with her daughters as she attempts to raise strong women with a strong sense of self worth and love. Yet beyond her daughters' devotion, she turns to literature, to *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse* or *The Golden Notebook* to find herself. It is in those stories that she finds both her nascent voice and a sense that she is not fully alone. Her vivid descriptions of academia resonated with me, as she chronicles her journey from non-tenured faculty member to public lecturer, designer of a women's studies major, and eventually to tenured professor. Her pains at balancing being mother, professor, and feminist are felt on every page, yet there are moments of positive optimism such as family get-togethers with colleagues or when she brings her own story (teacher as text) into the classroom. Such occasions bring her unbridled joy as she bridges her personal and professional spheres.