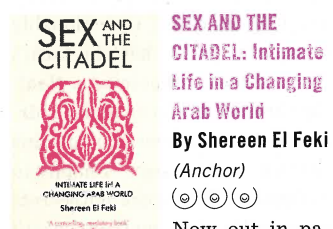


father about the impact the tragedy had on their lives. It's also at grief camp where Lamb-Shapiro's eye for irony really comes to the front. The camp is in Livingston, N.J., she notes, and the kids are all forced to wear T-shirts that read "Sponsored by New York Life" on the back, which she rightly finds to be "uncomfortably predatory." Although at times the book feels a little all-over-the-place, Lamb-Shapiro's journey seems to result in earnest realizations, which sums up the best case scenario of any self-help experience.

—ERICA WETTER



Now out in paperback, Shereen El Feki's well-researched volume on the sex lives of contemporary Arabs is sure to appear on a college syllabus near you. El Feki grew up in Canada, but spent childhood vacations in Egypt. Her familiarity with the culture and language allowed her to play sexual spy in a country that keeps its bedroom doors firmly shut. She discovers a diverse—if not stunted—sexual landscape where, thanks to the Internet, young people know more about sex than ever before. But while technology opens eyes, it'll take a sexual revolution to open minds.

El Feki had more access to women than men, and what she learns from them is frustrating. Socially acceptable sex is confined—for the most part—to straight, married people. But educated women in Egypt marry later, delaying their official sexual lives. And of course, men who have sex outside marriage get more of a pass (though not by much) than women. El Feki also introduces readers to several young Egyptians quietly challenging the system, at great personal risk. One is secretly married to the man she loves. Another

is a sexual-health educator. While El Feki's constant quoting of studies and data sometimes makes her book tedious, she introduces one big idea worth advocating: True freedom in the Arab world won't happen without sexual liberty. "Sexual rights" she asserts, "are integral human rights." The next Arab Spring can't come fast enough. —AILEEN GALLAGHER



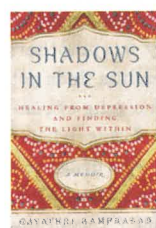
SEX CHANGES: A Memoir of Marriage, Gender, and Moving On
By Christine Benvenuto
(St. Martin's Press)

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The memoir form has recently given voice to many who identify as transgender. But author Christine Benvenuto sheds light on the other side of that equation—describing what it's like to be a woman whose husband reveals he wants to transition into life as a woman. Left to mourn the loss of the man she loved, she reveals, "He rewrote the whole of my adult life as a love affair with a phantom."

Benvenuto paints an overwhelmingly negative portrait of her former husband, characterizing him as cruel and self-absorbed. As a result, her book has attracted its share of controversy, including protests at readings and censorship online. Indeed, she pushes aside all political correctness and politeness in favor of total candor. And while this decision adds an appealing honesty and fire to Benvenuto's writing, it also causes her commentary to lean into offensive territory. One reason for her defensive tone may be that her former spouse, Joy Ladin, penned her own memoir blaming all her struggles on Benvenuto. But despite her apparent disgust over Ladin's transition, Benvenuto does deliver some thoughtful reflections on our society's strict binary gender roles, wondering if they may be to blame for the rising number of people who feel they were born in

the wrong body. More time devoted to her husband's journey might have made her story stronger, but Benvenuto tells a compelling tale that is at times both insightful and humorous. —ADRIENNE URBANSKI



SHADOWS IN THE SUN: Healing From Depression and Finding the Light Within: A Memoir
By Gayathri Ramprasad
(Hazeldeen)

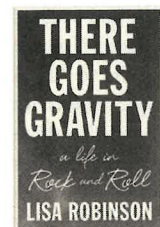
⓪⓪⓪⓪

From Lena Dunham's portrayal of obsessive-compulsive disorder on *GIRLS* to countless TV ads for antidepressants, mental illness has become a well-publicized affliction. But readers are reminded by Gayathri Ramprasad's haunting memoir that this wasn't always the case. In the early '80s, in her homeland of India, Ramprasad was struck with debilitating depression that was dismissed as adolescent angst. Visits to the doctor resulted in prescriptions for anti-nausea medication and suggestions from her family that she "pray with a pure heart" in order to treat her "imaginary sickness." When Ramprasad finally learned the nature of her malady, its stigma only invited further anxiety. "The truth about mental illness imprisons me and my family," she writes, "exiling us into lives of shame and secrecy."

It's heartbreaking to bear witness to Ramprasad's lonely suffering as she marries, migrates to the United States, and becomes a mother. And some anecdotes—like Ramprasad digging her own grave in her backyard while her toddler is alone at home watching *Mister Rogers*—aren't easy to stomach. But that's what makes *Shadows in the Sun* unforgettable. Her descriptions of failed psychiatric treatments (including electroconvulsive therapy) and several suicide attempts (even her wedding sari becomes an appealing noose) reveal a woman constantly on the brink of madness while even

her best friend remains clueless. Now an advocate for the mentally ill, Ramprasad offers hope with this story. But perhaps there is a greater message in her harrowing journey: silence can be poisonous.

—HELEN MATATOV



THERE GOES GRAVITY: A Life in Rock and Roll
By Lisa Robinson
(Riverhead)

⓪⓪⓪⓪

Music geeks of a certain age swoon over Lisa Robinson. Today, she is best known as an editor and music writer at *Vanity Fair*. But those who grew up in the '70s and '80s devoured her reporting on David Bowie, Iggy Pop, and the Clash in gritty rock bibles like *CREEM* and *Hit Parader*. Her new book tracks the highlights of her nearly five-decade career in music. But this is no industry tour. The book's appeal is in Robinson's steadfast, insistent identity as a music fan above all else. From her teenage years following Thelonus Monk to her championing of Lady Gaga, Robinson chronologically follows her exploits touring with, interviewing, and even entertaining legends like the Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, John Lennon, Patti Smith, Michael Jackson, and U2. The book is peppered throughout with insights about those she felt didn't get their due, always with a critical awareness of the sexism she both encountered and circumvented as one of the rare women in music journalism.

These insights, often sparkling with dry-yet-gossipy wit, are the best parts of *There Goes Gravity*, even as they leave readers wanting more. In fact, this history only whets the appetite for a continuation of Robinson's analyses of a business she not only witnessed, but affected. And while Robinson would surely protest, I'd like to see a companion volume where the author herself is more the star of the show. —MARIA ELENA BUSZEK