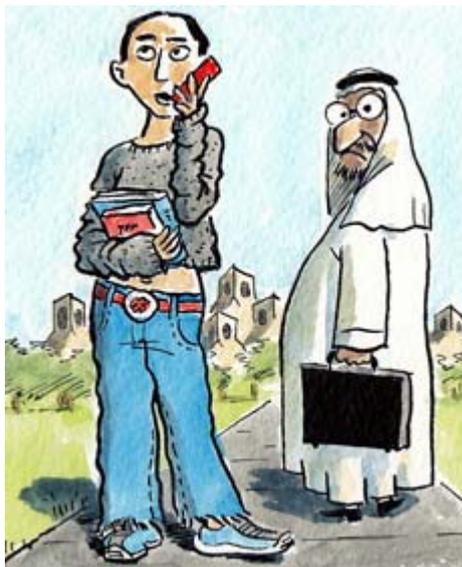


## Cross about cross-dressing

*Is it a wicked Western habit that should be stopped?*



*Illustration by Claudio Munoz*

Cross-dressing is on the rise among young Qataris. The local press says that more tradition-minded locals are upset by the growing number of young women affecting a masculine style of dress, baggy trousers, short hair and deep voices. These women, who call themselves boyat, which translates as both tomboy and transsexual (and is derived from the English word boy), are being seen in schools and on university campuses where some are said to harass their straiter-laced sisters.

In an episode of a talk show on Qatari television, called Lakom al Karar (The Decision is Yours), a leading academic said that the “manly women” phenomenon was part of a “foreign trend” brought into Qatar and the Gulf by globalisation. Foreign teachers, the internet and satellite television have been blamed. So have foreign housemaids, for badly influencing children in their care.

The studio audience was divided over how to respond. Some called for the death penalty for cross-dressers, while others favoured medical treatment. A rehabilitation centre for Qatari boyat has been set up, but a local report says that as many as 70% of them refuse to give up their “abnormal behaviour”.

It is not just Qataris who are rattled. A year ago the ministry of social affairs in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) launched a campaign against “masculine women”. The project, entitled “Excuse me, I’m a girl”, involved workshops, lectures and television programmes, stressing the virtues of femininity and raising awareness of the presumed dangers of women looking like men. An emirates’ foundation is helping to fund a research project on “gender identity disorder among Emirati youth”.

One official describes the “deviant behaviour” of the boyat as a “menace” to society. But others sound less fazed. An American university lecturer in the region says the short hair and gym shoes worn by these young women would look perfectly normal on an American campus. That is just what unnerves the traditionalists.

**Fonte: The Economist. Disponível em: <<http://www.economist.com>>. Acesso em: Feb. 1st 2010.**