For a long time historians thought that almost all witches were female, and therefore that the witch-hunt had to do with women and femininity. However, interest in male witches has significantly increased in recent decades, especially after Lara Apps and Andrew Gow’s powerful analysis of male witches in a few classic texts of witchcraft theory, which appeared in 2003. According to the current research, the proportion of witches known to have been male is steadily increasing.

Currently it is estimated that around 100,000–200,000 trials and 40,000–60,000 executions took place in early modern Europe. The disproportionate number of women among the victims has frequently been noted, but the gender picture has been changing during the last decade. Traditionally we thought that roughly two-thirds of the accused in western Europe were women, whereas in the eastern “peripheries” the majority of witches were male. Lately, it has been shown that even in western Europe there were areas with significant numbers of male witches. In the Parlement de Paris, a little more than half of the accused were men. In Normandy, the proportion of males among the accused was over 70 percent, in Estonia 60 percent and in Iceland over 90 percent. The geographical
variations are likely to be significant. The sex ratios in eastern European regions have not been comprehensively studied, but some suggestions for the ratios in northeast Europe at least can be made on the basis of Finland and Estonia. This chapter will analyze the current historiography of gender in witch trials with the help of the contrasting material from Finland.

**Gender and Sex**

The history of sex and gender in witchcraft historiography has followed that of women and gender in general. One important part of this common development has been the differentiation between sex and gender. By the early 1980s, historians who specialized in women’s history were increasingly discussing ways in which social and cultural systems of sexual differentiation affected both women and men, and began to use the word “gender” to describe these systems. At that time, they differentiated primarily between “sex”, by which they meant physical, morphological, and anatomical differences (often called “biological differences”) and “gender”, by which they meant a culturally constructed, historically changing, and often unstable system of differences. Because it was thought more neutral and less obviously political, “gender” soon became the more widely used term: scholars in many fields increasingly switched from “sex” to “gender”, “sex roles” became “gender roles” and “sex distinctions” became “gender distinctions”. The consequence has been that many scholars have used the terms “sex” and “gender” as more or less interchangeable.

In writing the history of witchcraft, the differentiation of sex and gender has partly been sidelined longer than in the study of the history of women and gender in general, despite such excellent work by gender historians such as Diane Purkiss, Lyndal Roper and Alison Rowlands. This

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