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WHO IS HANDSOME AND WHO IS BEAUTIFUL? DOES 'THE SHOE FIT': FROM NO/YES TO 'EVERYTHING GOES'

The paper aims at examining the gendered-ness of *handsome* and *beautiful* in English collocations referring to a person. Dictionary definitions have been scrutinized in addition to native and non-native English speaking informants' responses. It has been shown that the discourse meaning of a word is not necessarily the same as its dictionary meaning. Both studies show that there are discrepancies, fluctuation, and wavering in mind and feeling. However, the *core meaning* of the words *handsome* and *beautiful* when referring to a person is shown to be preserved. Both words have been proven to be gendered, *beautiful* to a lesser degree.

Key words: lexicology, lexicography, lexicographical definitions, gender, dictionary vs. discourse meaning

I INTRODUCTION: THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

The referential approach to meaning defines meaning by establishing the interdependence between words and the things and concepts they refer to (this kind of interrelation is marked by the term denotation). Referential meaning refers to the relationship between words as referring items and referents as the characteristics of the world to which the words refer. Referential theory of meaning presupposes the existence of three components closely related to the concept of meaning: the sound-form of the linguistic sign, the concept and the thing denoted which constitute the 'basic triangle' which is the basis of the referential model of meaning. All referential models and approaches to meaning presume and imply the ex-

istence of the relationship between the thing denoted and its meaning. The terms which are alternatively used for referential meaning are: denotative, cognitive or conceptual. There is the difference between meaning and concept (compare synonymous words expressing essentially the same concept but having different meaning, e.g. *pretty*, *lovely*, *handsome*). There is also the difference between meaning and the thing denoted, e.g. we can denote one and the same object by more than one word with a different meaning: a *man* can be referred to as *man*, *fair-haired man*, *gentleman*, *my disaster*, *my ex*, *person*, *he*. Denotative meaning is considered to be the central factor in language communication whereas other types of meaning: connotative, social, affective, reflected, collocative, thematic are peripheral in contrast to denotative meaning which is integral to the essential functioning of language. Denotative meaning is assigned priority on the basis of the logical complexity of its organization. Connotative meaning is what is communicated by virtue of what language refers to over and above its purely conceptual content. The boundary between conceptual and connotative meaning is coincident with the crucial distinction between language and the real world. Connotations are relatively unstable and they vary according to culture, historical period and the experience of the individual. Connotative meaning is open-ended whereas denotative meaning is characterized by the finiteness and determinateness of the conceptual content. Dictionaries traditionally record words and their meaning as if they were independent, existing *per se*. This may be true, but such a view on the nature of meaning has the consequence that words and their meanings are torn from their mother context, 'decontextualized and seem autonomous and fossilized, like flies caught in amber' (Moon, 1987: 87), or 'like butterflies caught and pinned for observation' (McKean: 2006) so that a 'lexicographer becomes a curator in the word museum' (McKean: 2006). Context is crucial to lexicography: words need wings and context is their wings. Context disambiguates, does away with homonymy and polysemy, helps achieve "reasonableness", and makes communication, otherwise impossible, possible. 'The message of a conventional dictionary is that most of the words in daily use have several meanings, and any occurrence of the word could signal any one of the meanings. If this were actually the case, communication would be virtually impossible' (Sinclair, 1986:60).

The functional approach to meaning (context and distribution). The functional approach to meaning maintains that the meaning of a linguistic unit may be studied only through its relation (syntagmatic and paradigmatic) to other linguistic units and not through its relation to either concept or referent, e.g. compare the meanings of *handsome* (as given by the OED) in *'handsome cookery books'* and *handsome* in *'he was elected by a handsome majority'*. In the functional approach semantic investigation is directed to the analysis of the difference and sameness of meaning (this is the principle of *contrastiveness* in linguistic structure) and the meaning is understood basically as the function of the use of linguistic units. The semantic component that serves to distinguish one word from all others containing identical morphemes is referred to as *differential* meaning. This kind of meaning can be seen in *minimal pairs* (Milojević, 1996). Two key concepts of the functional approach to meaning are *context* and *distribution* by which we understand the position of a linguistic unit in relation to other linguistic units. Context is crucial to functioning by means of language. It resolves ambiguities which rarely exist in *ex tempore* discourse due to shared information and experience of the participants in communication - words stop being ambiguous in real situations, irrespective of the multitude of potential meanings, unless intentionally meant to stay such, for example in punning and in order to achieve humorous effect. Reasonable and sound as it seems, dare we say, such an approach to meaning is not without its drawbacks, sometimes due to linguistically trivial reasons (e.g. processing capacity of a computer): the optimal stretch of language that is sufficient for disambiguation has to be decided on in every single case; however, the length of the stretch of language when writing a dictionary has to be set beforehand, say fifty characters or so that appear on either side of the keyword (as in, say, *Collins COBUILD English Language Dictionary*, 1987), and that may simply not be enough and *'desideratum of reasonableness'*, as put forward by Rosamund Moon (Moon, 1987: 87), is only an ideal to be strived for and wished for. Another drawback may be over-contextualization. Having in mind that meaning is after all a subjective experience, too many contexts featuring the use of a particular word can mean an "as-you-like-it" approach: "a word means what I want it to mean" thus leading towards dissipation of core meaning. This might be a major issue when it comes to the so-called collaborative, "open" diction-

13

aries as enthusiastically advocated by Erin McKean. Dictionaries make an effort to present consensus views about meaning and produce objective statements. This, however, means that some interpretations and usages will be and must be left aside due to generalization.

Regardless of the nature of language evidence, our personal inclinations as researchers and the admiration that we might have for certain dictionaries, such as the *Collins COBUILD English Language Dictionary*, that was a lexicographical flag-ship in the 20th century, or the *Oxford English Dictionary*, or the 21st century avant-garde *Wordnik*, we cannot fail to notice pluralities of interpretation, irrespective of how hard the evidence is, leaving us with no final and absolute answers to the question of meaning and use, this being so much more due to the complexity of language itself than our inability to cope with it and prove ourselves up to the task. Words fail us, as Virginia Woolf says:

> It is words that are to blame. They are the wildest, freest, most irresponsible, most un-teachable of all things. Of course, you can catch them and sort them and place them in alphabetical order in dictionaries. But words do not live in dictionaries; *they live in the mind*' (Woolf, 'Words Fail Me', 1937)

Our data, presented in this article, point to neither full lexicographical consensus as to the dictionary definition of *handsome* and *beautiful*, their meaning and use, nor full consensus of the language users whose language practice proves to be quite liberal and "what-you-will".

On the nature of lexicographical definitions. Denotation tends to be described as the definitional, literal, obvious or common-sense meaning of a sign. The term connotation is used to refer to the socio-cultural and personal associations of the sign. These associations: cultural, ideological, emotional, etc. are typically related to the speaker's social position, age, sex, and so on. In the case of words the denotative meaning is what dictionaries aim to provide. While theorists find it useful to distinguish connotation from denotation, in practice this distinction cannot be made in an easy, neat, and unquestionable way. Most semanticists argue that no sign is purely denotative so that no strict division between denotation and connotation can be made. Though aiming to provide definitions that are ideally denotative, connotations creep in as we can see, for example, in the definition of *handsome* that appears in the *Random House Dictionary*:

handsome, adj. 1. having an attractive, well-proportioned, and imposing appearance *suggestive of health and strength*. It is not that connotations are not welcome in the dictionary entry, it is just the question of whether '*suggestive of health and strength*', in the given example, should be integral part of the definition or be treated as a surplus though welcome explanatory addition. Another example of connotations making their way into the lexicographical definition can be the following: 'A woman who is handsome has an attractive, smart appearance, especially with features that are large and regular rather than small and delicate and that are considered to show strength of character' (*Collins COBUILD English Language Dictionary*) where *'and that are considered to show strength of character'* is a connotative extension included, however, into the definition. Connotations can develop into new denotations as in the example of *nebulous* in which case the once subsidiary, connotative meaning of 'hazy, vague, indistinct, or confused' has become dominant and once core meaning of 'cloudy or cloudlike; resembling a nebula or nebulae, nebular' is either pushed to the subsidiary position (see *Random House Dictionary of the English Language*) or considered marginal to the degree that it is completely left out (*Collins COBUILD English Language Dictionary*) and only what used to be the connotative meaning is kept: 'vague' (*Collins COBUILD English Language Dictionary*). However, in the case of *handsome* this is not the case. What we might find bothering about the inclusion of connotation into the definition is that connotations are not stable in the way denotations are - they are variable from the point of view of culture, time, and individual language users. Connotations are socially and culturally variable and they change over time. Generally speaking, woman, for example, had more negative denotations and more negative connotations in the past than it does now. But note the use of *woman* in the following situation: *There's a woman at the door!* It has a negative connotation and, instead, the proper way of saying this would be: *There's a lady at the door*! On the other hand, however, it is normal to say: *There's a man at the door!* and not *There's a gentleman at the door!* However, feminists would feel very much against the use of *lady* in this situation by ordinary, non-PC English speakers. There are many examples which show that connotations are socially variable and our data concerning meaning and the use of *handsome* and *beautiful* in reference to a person support this extensively.

Dictionary definitions are classical analytical *genus–differentia* definitions that are a type of *intensional* <u>definition</u> - one giving meaning of a word by specifying necessary and sufficient conditions for it to be used. The defining methods that dictionaries apply are basically contrastive and usually cluster around *genus proximum* (i.e. designating a superordinate class to which what is defined belongs) and *differentia specifica* (i.e. differentiae which distinguish it from others in the same class). Definitions are usually *tripartite* in that they consist of categories, which on their part, can be seen as a conglomerate of components. The meaning of a word can be seen as the sum of the semantic features it has and which are included in the semantic description, i.e. its definition. *Category features* assign the word to a semantic category, e.g. *beautiful* is a hyponym of *attractive*. *Property features* list the properties distinguishing the reference of the word, e.g. 'having perfection of form, colour, etc. or noble and spiritual qualities'. *Function features* assign a usual state or activity to the word, e.g. 'pleasing the senses'. Sometimes, when appropriate, the definition includes the specification of the 'extension' of a concept or expression in the form of a list of the set of things it extends to, or applies to, e.g. *'Beautiful*: when used of a person, it usually describes *a woman, girl, or small child'*.

Lexicographical definitions are deficient by default, which is due to the lexicographical practice of first decontextualizing - tearing words from their natural context for the purpose of observation and description and then, subsequent to all analytical tasks performed, trying their best to bring them to life again by weaving them into some "natural" or made-up context. Needless to say, full recovery is almost impossible after the damage has been done. At this point we would love to present a quotation from Dwight Bolinger's article 'Defining the Indefinable' (Bolinger, 1985):

> Lexicography is an unnatural occupation. It consists in tearing words from their mother context /.../ Half of the lexicographer's labour is spent repairing this damage to an infinitude of natural connections that every word in any language contracts with every other word, in a complicated neural web knit densely at the center but ever more diffusely as it spreads outward. A bit of context, a synonym, a grammatical category, an etymology for remembrance' sake, and a cross-reference or two - these are the additives that accomplish the repair. But the fact that it is a repair always shows, and explains why no two dictionaries agree in their patchwork, unless they copy each other' (Bolinger, 1985:69, quoted by Moon, 1987: 102).

Examples of the selected dictionary definitions of *handsome* and *beautiful* in reference to a person, followed by the discussion and comparison, prove Bolinger's opinion right and this we tackle in detail in the following Section.

II *HANDSOME AND BEAUTIFUL*
IN DICTIONARY DEFINITIONS

1.1 **handsome**, adj. 1. having an attractive, well-proportioned, and imposing appearance suggestive of health and strength; good-looking: *a handsome man*; *a handsome woman*. (*The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*)

1.2 **beautiful**, adj. having beauty. /.../ That which is *beautiful* has perfection of form, color, etc. or noble and spiritual qualities: *a beautiful landscape, girl (not man). Handsome* often implies stateliness or pleasing proportion and symmetry: *a handsome man*, *a handsome woman*. (*The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*)

2.1 **handsome**, adj. 1. A man who is handsome has an attractive face with regular features, *He was a tall, dark, and undeniably handsome man... ...a tall driver with a handsome face*. 2. A woman who is handsome has an attractive, smart appearance, especially with features that are large and regular rather than small and delicate and that are considered to show strength of character, e.g. /.../ *a strikingly handsome woman*. (*Collins CO-BUILD English Language Dictionary*)

2.2 **beautiful,** adj. someone or something that is beautiful is very good and pleasing to look at, e.g. *You are very beautiful...a very beautiful girl...a beautiful house...the table looked beautiful.* (*Collins COBUILD English Language Dictionary*)

3.1 **handsome** 1. pleasing to look at: attractive; especially of a person: having a pleasing appearance that causes romantic or sexual feelings in someone (a *handsome* face; I predict that someone tall, dark, and *handsome* is going to come into your life). ◊ Men are more frequently described as *handsome* than women. Synonyms see: *beautiful* (*Merriam-Webster Learner's Dictionary* http://www.learnersdictionary.com/definition/handsome)

3.2 **beautiful** 1: having beauty: such as a: very attractive in a physical way (a *beautiful* young woman/child; You have the most *beautiful* smile/eyes; b: giving pleasure to the mind or the senses (The film tells a *beautiful* story about two young lovers; a *beautiful* song; a *beautiful* dress/colour/garden/house). *Beautiful*, *pretty*, *lovely*, and *handsome* describe people and things that are pleasing to look at, hear, etc. *Beautiful*: when used of a person, it usually describes a woman, girl, or small child. Other overlapping and intersecting concepts, such as*: pretty*, *lovely* and *handsome* are to be used as follows: *pretty*, when used of a person, it almost always describes a woman or girl; *lovely* - it can also describe a person's character, and in this use it refers to both women and men; *handsome*: a woman who is described as *handsome* is attractive but usually not in a very delicate or feminine way (*Merriam-Webster Learner's Dictionary* http://www.learnersdictionary.com/definition/handsome).

4.1 **handsome** 1. having an attractive, well-proportioned, and imposing appearance suggestive of health and strength; good-looking: a handsome man; a handsome woman. Related forms: *handsomeish*, adjective; *handsomeness*, noun; *superhandsome*, adjective. (http://www.dictionary.com/browse/handsome Based on the *Random House Dictionary*)

British Dictionary (5.1) definitions for **handsome** (based on the *Collins English Dictionary* - Complete & Unabridged 2012 Digital Edition) are as following: 1. (of a man) good-looking, especially in having regular, pleasing, and well-defined features 2. (of a woman) fine-looking in a dignified way.

6.1 Definition of **handsome** in *Oxford Living English Dictionaries* (https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/handsome) is the following: *handsome* 1 (of a man) good-looking; (of a woman) striking and imposing rather than conventionally pretty.

However, we learn from the examples provided in this entry that *handsome women can be the prettiest, not too pretty, handsome rather than pretty, not pretty at all ('under no stretch of imagination'), mannish, and beautiful.* Let us consider the examples. Mind suspected contradiction (*handsome and the prettiest, not the 'handsomest'*) noticeable in the example provided by the same source and not covered by the definition: *She was a handsome woman then of course, the prettiest in Shepherds*

Bush some said.' The following two examples to be found here are more in line with the definition provided: *'The reporters are all Emma Thompson / Kate Winslet clones, handsome women, but not too pretty.'* (*'handsome but not too pretty'*); *'She had handsome, rather than pretty, features and deep brown eyes.'* (*handsome, rather than pretty*). That *handsome* does not imply being *pretty* is strikingly supported by this example chosen by the source quoted to back the definition provided: *'She was a tall woman, almost regal looking, however under no stretch of the imagination could she be described as pretty, although she was handsome.'* We find this example contrary to what is stated in the definition (which points to the 'unconventional prettiness') and we suggest amendments to it be made. One more example we think is worth considering. The following example is particularly interesting in that it points to the fuzzy edges of the attributes associated with a *man* (male) and a *woman* (female):*'Belinda is a handsome woman who bears an uncanny resemblance to John Cusack.'* As for the distinction between *handsome* and *beautiful* the maze becomes even more intricate. If you have ever asked yourself if handsome women are beautiful and can even win a beauty contest (mind you, not a handsomeness contest), the answer is: yes they can. Here is the example that comes from the *Oxford Living English Dictionaries*: *'Loren won a beauty contest at the age of 14, and she and Romilda, who was a handsome woman herself, embarked on careers as film extras.'* Some of our male native-speaker informants approve of this in that 'all women are beautiful' as a colleague of mine, an English lector, has handsomely put it. On the other hand, however, believe it or not, there are women who consider themselves handsome and feel embarrassed and put off if referred to as beautiful - this our data shows and that we shall discuss below under the heading: *Handsome* and *beautiful* in real English: Native-Speaker Informants (III *Handsome* and *beautiful* in discourse: real English examples).

6.2 The same source, *Oxford Living English Dictionaries*, provides this definition of **beautiful**: *beautiful* adjective 1. Pleasing the senses or mind aesthetically (*'beautiful poetry', 'a beautiful young woman')*. Nineteen examples of sentences follow: two of which feature *beautiful* in collocation with *woman* (*'a beautiful young lady'*; *'a beautiful actress'*), only one with *man* (*'In the end, three men are selected by three young women as being the*

19

most beautiful'), one with the indefinite subject ('*someone so young and beautiful'*), and the rest feature *beautiful* collocating with inanimate objects and natural phenomena (*sunrise*, *hat*, *eyes*, *garden*, *art*, *metal structure*, *city*, *house and garden*, *things*, *music*, *food*, *face*, *beach*, *poems*, *places*).

7.1 *Cambridge Dictionary* (https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/handsome) gives the following definition of **handsome** (superordinate term: 'attractive') 1. A handsome man is physically attractive in a traditional, male way ('*Her dream is to be whisked off her feet by a tall, dark, handsome stranger'*). A handsome woman is attractive in a strong way ('*a handsome woman in her fifties'*)

7.2 The definition of **beautiful** is the following: 1. very attractive (*a beautiful woman*; *breathtakingly beautiful scenery*; *She was wearing a beautiful dress*); 2. very pleasant (**'*a beautiful piece of music'*, '*beautiful weather'*); 3. mainly US very kind (**'*You did a beautiful thing in helping those poor children'*). Other examples feature these collocations: *beautiful countryside*, *beautiful city*, *beautiful dress*, *beautiful young woman*, *beautiful piece of music*. It might be interesting to note that this source (*Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus*) gives *no example* of *beautiful* collocating with *man*. It is also the only source that intensifies *attractive* when defining *beautiful* (see the definition above: *beautiful* 1. 'very attractive').

Dictionary definitions: comments and comparisons

According to the definition 1.1 (*The Random House Dictionary*) the adjective *handsome* can be used with either *man* or *woman* with no difference in meaning. However, the definitions 2.1 and 2.2 point out the difference in collocational meaning. Words like: *manish* and *womanish* when explaining collocational difference in reference to a *woman* and a *man* combined with *handsome* and *beautiful* respectively, are not used (compare 2.1 and 2.2. definition). This part of the differential meaning is filtered out and glossed over through stylistic adjustment by means of euphemization so that both 2.1 and 2.2 are the same in the sense that they are flattering contrary to *manish* and *womanish* that are not. 'A woman who

is described as *handsome* is attractive but usually not in a very delicate or feminine way' (3.2) also exemplifies rhetorical device of *euphemism* and *litotes*. Based on *the Random House Dictionary www.dictionary.com/* browse/handsome presents contemporary examples of *handsome*, none of which refers to a female person (4.1); however three out of five of historical examples feature woman as a collocate of handsome (e.g. He worships every *handsome* woman, who will allow herself to be polluted by his incense; If he had engaged himself to a *handsome* schoolmistress, it was his fancy, and he could afford it; Miss Glynne and her sister were known as "the *handsome* Miss Glynnes." According to *The Random House Dictionary beautiful* is *not to be used in reference to a man* (1.2)

The Collins COBUILD Dictionary* says, in a simple and simplistic definition, that *beautiful* refers to *someone* or *something* (2.2), that is very good and pleasing to look at, which we may interpret to mean that it applies both to *man* and *woman* (*someone* being the upper term for both). However, a *beautiful man* is not to be found among the examples provided - only *a beautiful girl* (i.e. *beautiful* collocating with a feminine gender noun).

Merriam-Webster Learner's Dictionary (3.1) also uses general terms like 'person', 'someone' when defining *handsome*. The example being: '*I predict that someone tall, dark, and handsome is going to come into your life'*. Can *someone* be *he* as well as *she*? However, we are warned that 'Men are *more frequently* (sic) described as *handsome* than women' (3.1). We are also warned that '*beautiful* when used of a person, /.../ *usually* (sic) describes a woman, girl, or small child'. 'More frequently' indicates fuzziness, the *absence of binary division* of the type: *beautiful* collocates exclusively with *woman* and *handsome* with *man* (3.1) 'Usually' and 'almost always' (3.2) point to the fact that the concepts overlap, the boundaries between them not being crisp-clear but fuzzy. Differential meaning is not pinpointed or verbally expressed. Moreover, it is not explicitly stated when it is that, say, *beautiful* collocates with *man*. No suggestion as to the femininity of a male as a prerequisite for him to be qualified as *beautiful* is overtly stated. It is left to the speaker's perception of the person in question with possible negative reaction from that particular person if he, himself, finds that 'the shoe does not fit' - that such qualification is inadequate, not fitting and inappropriate. This becomes evident from the data (answers) elicited from our LGBT informants. The same *Merriam-Webster Learner's*

21

Dictionary gives us some other pieces of advice on the usage of the related words that share the semantic field: *pretty* 'When used of a person, it almost always describes a woman or girl'; *Lovely* 'It can also describe a person's character, and in this use it refers to both women and men'; *handsome* 'A woman who is described as *handsome* is attractive but *usually* (sic) not in a very delicate or feminine way'. Again resort to euphemism and litotes as a cover-up rhetorical means is evident.

The *British Dictionary* (5.1) definitions for *handsome* (based on the *Collins English Dictionary* - Complete & Unabridged 2012 Digital Edition) are as following: 1. (of a man) good-looking, especially in having regular, pleasing, and well-defined features 2. (of a woman) fine-looking in a dignified way. The latter definition is beyond my grasp - the difference between good-looking (in reference to a man) and fine-looking (in reference to a woman). Could *handsome also* mean 'good-looking in a dignified way'? An interesting quotation is appended and we give it in full: [Americans] use the word "handsome" much more extensively than we do: saying that *Webster made a handsome speech in the Senate*, that *a lady talks handsomely*, (eloquently), that *a book sells handsomely*. A gentleman asked me on the Catskill Mountain, *whether I thought the sun handsomer there than at New York.* [Harriet Martineau, "Society in America," 1837] *The Collins English Dictionary* definition (5.1) compares reasonably with the one appearing in *The Collins COBUILD* (2.1): one might assume that the definitions converge, compare: *in a dignified way* (5.1) and *showing strength of character* (2.1).

It is interesting to note that the 4.1 source is the only one which makes mention of the related terms, such as: *handsomeish* and *superhandsome* (http://www.dictionary.com/browse/handsome Based on the *Random House Dictionary*). Other sources point only to the 'normal', expected gradation: *handsome*, *handsomer* (*more handsome*), *handsomest* (*most handsome*).

Oxford Living English Dictionaries (6.2) give only one example of *beautiful* collocating with *man* whereas *Cambridge Dictionary* (7.2) gives *not a single example* of the combination of the two.

III *HANDSOME* AND *BEAUTIFUL*
IN DISCOURSE: REAL ENGLISH EXAMPLES

Attributing *handsome* or *beautiful* to a female person is *user-variable and situation-variable.* To prove this we give the following examples from the movie *Summer Day's Dream* (1994 TV production of J. B. Priestley's play, starring John Gielgud) showing reactions of three characters to the sight of Madam Shestova, a young woman who is an official of the Soviet Government on duty in England. The way she looks, speaks and acts is military. Stephen Dawlish, a gentleman in his eighties, welcoming Madam Shestova to his house, addresses her as: 'a dear, *young lady'*; following that he suggests she should forget about her duty for a while and take a holiday while staying in his house: 'we'll put some roses into those *pretty cheeks of yours'* (min.14.22); 'she looks like a snow *queen* in uniform' is how Rosaline, his granddaughter and Christopher's sister, sees her (min. 18.58); Christopher, a young man, on his part, as he has fallen in love with Madam Shestova at first sight, tells her instantly, the very moment he sees her, she facing him, rigid looking and in her uniform: 'you are *the most beautiful woman* I have ever seen' (22.38). She, herself, says *she does not allow to be called like that* and acts in a rude way flinging away the bunch of roses he has offered her. As the story rolls on, we see that Madam Shestova has become a "real" woman, in three days, while staying with the Dawlishes, letting her hair loose and falling in love with Christopher despite being married and the severe repercussions she might face in her home-land. Stephen Dawlish's concluding remarks are the following: 'when you came here you were a *handsome* woman - now you are *beautiful'* (min. 1.18.43). Dawishes' garden, love and, needless to say, Shakespeare (Christopher reciting a quotation from the *Tempest*), *transformed a handsome woman into a beautiful one*. Speaking of Shakespeare, let us say that *handsome* does not appear at all in any of Shakespeare's poems or *The Sonnets* (www.shakespeareswords.com/Glossary?let=h); as for *beautiful* - it does.

One might witness the same speaker-perception-related fluctuation of the use of *handsome* and *beautiful* in reference to a male person. We may consider the following extract from John Burns' interview with Ian McKellen and Derek Jacobi (*International New York Times*, *Times Talks*,

London). Ian McKellen, talking about his days as a student at Cambridge and Derek Jacobi, says this: 'before coming to Cambridge he /Derek Jacobi/ was already trailing his clouds of glory and also *he was extremely beautiful* and very friendly and I was utterly enchanted by Derek in every way and have been ever since' (min. 1.14). I am wondering whether, if one had seen Derek Jacobi playing *Hamlet,* one would have been tempted to say that he was an *extremely handsome man*, using *handsome* as the *default*, if unaware of the fact that he was a gay person. Ian McKellen's words (*'extremely beautiful'*) reflect the fact that he and Derek were lovers at the time. I am also wondering whether Ian and Derek would allow themselves to be called a *handsome couple* as is often heard in reference to heterosexual couples ('a very *handsome couple* indeed'; 'they will make a *handsome couple'* are the examples from our collection of data). Collocations, as becomes obvious, reinforce meaning distinctions. The very act of uniting a couple can be very beautiful, nice and very handsome, depending on the speaker's perception, as is shown in the following dialogue taken from the movie *The Europeans* based upon the novel of Henry James (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SnXZF6zEHxg): Mr Brand: 'I would like, in my ministerial capacity, to unite this young couple'. Gertrude: 'Oh, that's very beautiful of you, Mr. Brand!' Bridegroom to the minister: 'It is very nice and very handsome!'

When asked which attribute: *handsome*, *beautiful* or *either handsome or beautiful* they would use in reference to a *man* and a *woman* respectively, eleven *non-native-speaker informants*, students of English (English Department, Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade), produced the answers and the results are as follows: *seven out of eleven* informants think that *man can only be handsome*; *nobody thinks that a man can only be beautiful*; *four of them would associate a man with being either handsome or beautiful*; *everybody thinks that women are only beautiful and nobody would use handsome or either handsome or beautiful in reference to a woman.* Their teachers, native-speaker informants, two of them teaching English as lectors at the English Department, Faculty of Philology, Belgrade University, and one of them also a university lector and an English language school principal, have given the following answers to the same question. The British-English speaking lector says this: 'I'd say that *handsome* when applied to a woman evokes a Grecian image,

tall, statuesque, the femininity tempered slightly with a hint of athletic prowess. *Beautiful* is a more general category, *so handsome women are also beautiful'*. He goes on to say: 'When applied to a man, *beautiful* always implies a degree of femininity, I think, though not necessarily effeminate. It's often applied to younger men, before they fill out. Brad Pit was beautiful in Thelma and Louise, but grew tougher looking later, now he is handsome'. The American-English speaking lector gives the following answer: 'In my family we would use *handsome* and *beautiful* interchangeably when applied to a woman'. Here is what she says about how she feels about *beautiful* when applied to a man: 'It is certainly not conventional today; but if you are asking for my first connotation if someone were to describe a male as beautiful today, I would understand it to mean he is feminine'. The Irish-English speaking lector ventures this definition: 'Well, I would say that a *beautiful* woman means physically attractive, while a *handsome* woman would mean not classically beautiful and I think used for older women'; her comment on the British-English speaking lector's definition is: 'Interesting!!!' (mind three exclamation marks). Her answer to the question how she feels about *beautiful* as applied to a man is the following: 'Well, to be honest I would never refer to a man as beautiful! Handsome, yes! However, a beautiful man, would suggest very positive characteristics - kindness, caring, etc, to me!'

What follows is the analysis of the input elicited from *thirty three* young people, age 18 to 25, undergraduate, postgraduate and one doctoral student, *native American-English speakers*, US citizens. The informants are M / F and according to how they declare themselves. Seven feminists who initially accepted to take part in the interview declined with either a vague or no explanation at all. This I find interesting having in mind that 'feminism' has been voted the 2017 Word of the Year by the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, 'expressing collective curiosity and mental preoccupation' (see 2017 *Word of the Year. Behind the Scenes. How we chose 'feminism'*, Peter Sokolowski, editor). I acknowledge the assistance of Aleksandar Jovanović, a junior colleague of mine, in approaching the informants, organizing interviews and providing me with their answers; I alone, however, am responsible for the data analysis and the conclusions.

The response to the question of *if and when they would use handsome referring to a woman* ranges from total denial: 'I never use it', 'I have never heard someone call a woman handsome' (eight informants) to

almost but not quite denying using it: 'I don't normally use it', 'not often at all', 'rarely if ever'. Others would use *handsome* only when referring to a *man* ('when describing men', 'only about dudes', 'complementing young boys', 'when talking about a male', 'only when speaking about guys', ' to refer to an attractive male', etc). Our informants' attitudes towards the use of *handsome* when describing a *woman* vary from *positive and ultra-positive* ('stately and well groomed'; 'sounds slightly off to me but I still take it as a complement to the woman'; 'having features that are uber feminine'; 'gender should not matter') to *negative* and *disapproving* ('It could be seen as mocking; 'it would sound uncomfortable and could be mocking'; 'a way to joke that a woman looks masculine, usually in a negative way'; 'in today's society, that would basically be calling her butch'; 'I'd consider it poor English'; 'Some women may take it as an insult. With what society has set, in how certain words are assigned to each gender; I don't think many women would take it nicely'; 'Handsome for a female might be taken offensively if she has made an effort to look beautiful'; 'Women should be beautiful not handsome, but I guess it's 2018 everything goes'). We single out the opinion of the informant who is a member of the LGBTQ population (a female, 25, doing her PhD in psychology): 'It depends on the person and how fluid they feel in their identity. I would take it as a compliment and have asked my girlfriend to call me handsome in lieu of beautiful, not because I am a gay, but I definitely dress masculine and that is the energy I carry. I do not feel beautiful in a suit, I feel handsome. My girlfriend would probably not be offended, but she prefers to be told she's beautiful. Unless you were really trying to offend someone, I don't think it'd be offensive. Or if that person was insecure in how masculine they look they may be offended'.

As for the question *if and when they (thirty-three informants altogether) would use beautiful referring to a man*, the following answers caught our attention: interestingly enough our informants tend to assume neutral-ness of *beautiful* ('it is a general and overarching term'; 'I use beautiful usually in a more general sense to *holistically* describe someone as a beautiful (kind, caring, empathetic) person, as well as good looking) in comparison to *handsome* which is, as they say, gender-marked ('beautiful is my default'; 'Beautiful' is more of a neutral term, whereas 'handsome' has a distinctly masculine connotation'; 'While handsome feels like a gendered word, beautiful feels significantly less gender-specific, and can

apply to men. It doesn't necessarily mean effeminate features, just generally attractive features'). In this respect, such opinions are in line with the following one: 'I think it's more socially acceptable to call a man *beautiful*, compared to calling a woman *handsome*'. The results, however, can be presented as a *cline*: neutral core in the middle, positive and negative attitudes being the end-points. Positive attitudes are expressed, for example, as follows: 'a beautiful man is a really attractive man'; 'I also use it to describe exceptionally attractive men'; 'flawless sort of man'; 'implicates a specific attractive nature'. On the other hand, some think that calling a man *beautiful* is *derogatory* and means *devaluation* ('it is funny'; 'I don't personally think much of a man being described as beautiful'; 'You don't call a guy beautiful unless you want to demean them'; 'I am a male and it would sound weird to be called beautiful'; 'some men may take it as an insult, because some may connect it with femininity'). Two comments stand out in the sense that they point to social circumstances that are behind some usage reasoning and decisions: 'times have changed to make this term alright for men. If a man is 'beautiful', then I believe that he just looks ethereal. It's just not something I've grown up hearing as a way to describe men'. The other comment is slogan-like 'Gender should not matter', reflecting current gender-equality trends.

The comparison of the pieces of information obtained from the informants uncovers the following facts: some informants are definite about the meaning and use (e.g. *'I would never refer to a man as beautiful! Handsome yes!'* or 'Applying beautiful to a man is *certainly not conventional'*) but, the overall impression their opinions create is that of fluctuation (e.g. a lot of *may*s and *might*s), wavering in mind and feeling, an impression of fuzziness rather than that of crisp-clear thought and attitudes. However, the *core meaning* of the words *handsome* and *beautiful* when referring to a person is shown to be preserved: *handsome* implying masculine characteristics and *beautiful* implying feminine ones; the conceptual edges, however, are fuzzy as well as the attitudes so that a good deal of vacillation is evident. *The discourse meaning of a word is not necessarily the same as its dictionary meaning* is what Dr Michael McCarthy used to teach and preach during his 1986 Lexicology course at the Arts Faculty, Birmingham University. Thirty years later, I am happy, as an erstwhile student of his, to be able to prove his creed: a dictionary tries to capture meaning

27

but lexicographers need to be aware of the *ad hoc* way in which language operates and how it may fail to reflect the carefully elaborated network of *genus* words and *diferentiae* of the dictionary entry. 'Words do not live in dictionaries, they live in the mind' (Woolf, 1937).

In conclusion, we give the floor to Otto Jespersen's lucid remarks that 'to time shall stand':

> Language is nothing but a set of human habits, the purpose of which is to give expression to thoughts and feelings, and especially to impart them to others. As with other habits it is not to be expected that they should be perfectly consistent. No one can speak exactly as everybody else or speak exactly in the same way under all circumstances and at all moments, hence a good deal of vacillation here and there. The divergences would certainly be greater if it were not for the fact that the chief purpose of language is to make oneself understood by other members of the same community; this presupposes and brings about a more or less complete agreement on all essential points (Jespersen, 1979:16)

IV CONCLUSION

The paper focuses on the English words *handsome* and *beautiful* when referring to a person, trying to see if these words are gendered or not and if yes, to what degree. Basic assumptions are the following: collocations reinforce meaning distinctions; there is no THE dictionary as a Platonic ideal; the discourse meaning of a word is not necessarily the same as its dictionary meaning; discourse meaning is *user-variable and situation-variable* and lexicographers as well as dictionary users need to be aware of the *ad hoc* and *ex tempore* way in which language operates so that it may fail to reflect the carefully elaborated network of *genus proximum* words and *diferentiae* of the dictionary entry; however, the integrity of the core meaning of a word is preserved no matter how variable the word meaning may get - the fact that it does not dissipate makes communication possible. This we have proven and the results are presented in this paper. Comparative study of the dictionary entries is followed and complemented by study of the responses of native (and non-native) speakers of English. Both studies show that there is fluctuation, wavering in mind and feeling. The impression is that of fuzziness rather than that of crisp-clear thought and attitudes. However, the *core meaning* of the words *handsome* and *beautiful* when referring to a person is shown to

be preserved: *handsome* implying masculine characteristics and *beautiful* implying feminine ones; the conceptual edges, however, are fuzzy as well as the attitudes, so that a good deal of vacillation is evident.

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Sažetak

KO JE KO I KO JE KAKAV?
***HANDSOME* I *BEAUTIFUL* U ENGLESKOM JEZIKU**

U fokusu rada je istraživanje fenomena rodnosti na primeru engleskih reči *handsome* i *beautiful* onda kad se one odnose na lica. Namera je da se, iz ovovremene perspektive, sagleda aktuelno stanje stvari: da li su i u kojoj meri pomenute reči rodno obeležene, tj. da li se, pod kojim uslovima i u kojoj meri - u dijapazonu od isključivog do proizvoljnog - vezuju za osobe muškog, ženskog ili oba pola. Istraživanje polazi od pretpostavke da ne postoji idealan rečnik i da se rečničko i diskursno značenje reči ne moraju poklapati budući da ovo potonje uključuje varijablu govornika i varijablu situacionog konteksta. Leksikografi, kao i govornici, treba da su svesni *ad hoc* i *ex tempore* svojstava jezičkog delanja te da se, s obzirom na to, može očekivati nepoklapanje značenja u govornoj praksi sa značenjima umreženim u složenim i pedantnim leksikografskim definicijama sročenim po šemi: *genus proximum*, *differentia specifica*. Pokazuje se, ipak, da, bez obzira na misaonu i emotivnu fluktuaciju koja karakteriše upotrebu, jezgreno značenje reči ostaje sačuvano. Ovo se u radu dokazuje i rezultati se prezentuju. Komparativno sagledavanje rečničkih značenja, čime rad započinje, dopunjava

se istraživanjem sa informantima: izvornim govornicima engleskog jezika ali i onima kojima engleski nije maternji. Zanimljivo je da obe studije - i ona koja se odnosi na analizu i poređenje rečničkih definicija i ona koja se odnosi na analizu i poređenje aktuelne upotrebe u jezičkoj komunikaciji - pokazuju nesaglasnosti i fluktuaciju i u misaonom i u emotivnom domenu a u vezi sa rečima *handsome* i *beautiful* koje su bile u fokusu istraživanja; jezgreno značenje reči, pokazujemo, ostaje sačuvano. Relevantnost ovog rada da se sagledati u kontekstu savremenih kretanja i orijentacija u definisanju i eksponiranju rodnosti u jeziku. Implikacije relevantne u prevođenju i nastavi mogle bi biti predmet novog rada.

Ključne reči*: leksikologija, leksikografija, leksikografske definicije, leksikografsko značenje vs. značenje u diskursu, rodnost