

Bodies in Japanese Language An Introduction to the Polysemous Character of Corporeality

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Abstract This article presents an inspection into the vast arena occupied by terms and signs in Japanese language that designate the word 'body'. The study is centred around etymons and semantic descriptions offered in selected monolingual lexical sources, thereby revealing slight divergencies that surface when confronting these entries in order to underscore the ambiguity and hybridity that characterise corporeality itself. In addition, part of this study is dedicated to Ichikawa Hiroshi's semantic analysis of the Japanese word *mi* (body), to Uno Kuniichi's discourse on the *shintai* (body) and to insights on corporeality offered by Kan Takayuki. The purpose of illustrating this diversified lexical treasure that surrounds, sustains and recreates bodies is to draw attention to the central position occupied by corporeality itself in Japanese culture, where the body/bodies emerge as a catalyst of cultural production.

Keywords Body. Words. Corporeality and language. Shintai. Nikutai. Mi. Karada. Ichikawa Hiroshi. Uno Kuniichi. Kan Takayuki.

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Bodies do not only pass meaning along, or pass it along in their uniquely responsive way. They develop choreographies of signs through which they discourse: they run (or lurch, or bound, or feint, or meander...) from premise to conclusion; they turn (or pivot, or twist...) through the process of reasoning; they confer with (or rub up against, or bump into...) one another in narrating their own physical fate. (Foster [1996] (2005), xi)

1 Introduction

This article¹ offers an overview of the kaleidoscopic landscape and broad array of terminologies and written signs defining the word 'body' in Japanese language. The survey focuses in particular on the etymological and semantic explanations provided in selected monolingual dictionaries to display discrepancies among the same vocabularies seen as a reflection of the ambiguity and hybridity that affect corporeality itself, and on the correspondent translations edited in Japanese-English dictionaries.

The aim of this article is to highlight the complex lexical system and its multi-layered readings, in which corporeality is embedded, a phenomenon that I interpret as an inverted tip of the iceberg that shows the centrality of corporeality in cultural production.

It should be considered that the words for 'body' given here are only a part of the rich vocabulary. In addition, each word has a sort of own life and its nuances and meanings may change throughout history, from context to context, from author to author, and even from sentence to sentence of a single writer, as I try to demonstrate in my research on texts written by Hijikata Tatsumi, the founder of the avant-garde dance called *butō* (see, for instance, Centonze 2018a; 2018b; 2020).²

Thus, the suggestions provided should be considered as a sort of propaedeutic approach to a wider problem that involves critical issues of academic investigation on corporeality and methodology itself.

In order to observe how these terms surrounding the body are ap-

¹ What is presented here is an earlier survey I deepened some years ago at the Waseda University Library. This research has been made possible thanks to the scholarship by Canon Foundations in Europe Fellowship which offered me the opportunity in 2007 to deepen my research on corporeality and performing arts in Japan, where I continued to investigate on the body in performance and writings until the beginning of 2019. Hence, the study presented in this article precedes great part of my publications (see, for instance, Centonze 2018a; 2018b; 2020) and is one of their hidden backbones. As a consequence, my publications should be read in light of the suggestions provided here, and the questions pertaining to language, raised in this article.

² My concern is to investigate corporeality and the different terms for 'body' in performance and literature.

plied in a certain context, I give three examples of discourses by theorists who deal with the question of corporeality and present their insights on some Japanese word definitions for 'body'. Part of this study is dedicated to Ichikawa Hiroshi's ([1993] 2007) semantic analysis of the Japanese word *mi* (body), to Uno Kuniichi's (2000) discourse on the *shintai* (body) and to insights on corporeality offered by Kan Takayuki (1983).

From a linguistic point of view, this study is only an embryonal elaboration that may be further developed in different directions. Many issues that came to the fore when consulting the definitions for 'body' in different dictionaries presented here require a further systematisation. Thus, with this article, rather than providing answers, I would like to raise questions and open up spaces for scholars of diverse areas for reflections upon this linguistic mosaic (and sometimes labyrinth).

This study also requires a further transcultural investigation into Asian realities, in a wider perspective extending the discourse to a transversal study on the terms for 'body' and on corporeality in Asian cultures, historically based on dynamics of embodiment of culture, which stands out as an *implicit* and *intrinsic* aspect.

Although my specialisation is not in language studies, the study of texts and primary sources is a fundamental approach, on which my research is based in order to provide a philological investigation on corporeal phenomena. I also consider the high value intrinsic to the oral tradition and transmission, the way artists express their thought, the words they choose when talking about the body.

I hope that it can be useful for performance and dance scholars who are concerned with corporeality and that it may contribute to a further widening of the concept of corporeality.

At the same time, my hope is to implicitly suggest the high potentiality of and importance played by dance or performance studies, seen as a discipline that sheds an interdisciplinary light on questions concerning corporeality, and furnish further frames of understanding cultural practices, such as language, by focusing their rapport with the corporeal phenomenon, due to the fact that dance studies depart from the necessary practice of focusing the attention on the body.

1.1 Some Notes on Japanese Language

A brief introduction to notions of Japanese linguistics is also necessary in order to approach this investigation on morphemes concerning the body.

The Japanese writing system is a texture of four different scripts, and permits, as Shibatani ([1990] 2005, 92) outlines, a "multiplicity of coding possibilities": *kanji* (lit. 'Chinese characters'), the two syllab-

baries *katakana* and *hiragana*, and the Latin script known as *rōmaji*. Previous to the introduction of the Chinese script started in the 5th century and progressively conveyed through Chinese Classics and Chinese translations of Sanskrit Buddhist works, Japan did not have a writing of its own. Therefore, Japan, alongside with Korea and Vietnam, is considered part of the so-called Sinosphere, i.e. the cultural area influenced by Chinese writing that included China itself (Whitman et al. 2010, 74). Thus, practices of vernacular readings, called *kundoku* 訓読 in Japanese, of classical Chinese texts, and annotations with reading glosses are considered a “linguistic habitus” in non-Sinitic cultures existing since the premodern age (Whitman et al. 2010, 74).

As Shibatani ([1990] 2005, 120) outlines, the systematic borrowing of Chinese words took place in three waves, which generated a layering of pronunciations and readings of the same Chinese characters according to their cultural origin.

Pollack (1986, 3-54) focuses on the transition from orality to literacy in Japan and considers this process as the beginning of a “fracture of meaning”. In his seminal study, Pollack (1986, 3-54) discusses how the adoption of a foreign writing system made of signs loaded with powerful semantics, brought to a nearly constant process of manipulation of the script and literate representation throughout Japan’s history in order to adapt it to and combine it with the native oral “matter”.³ This process has been accentuated by the structural differences that characterise Chinese and Japanese language: the former is monosyllabic, isolating, uninflected, and the latter is polysyllabic, agglutinating and highly inflected (Pollack 1986, 19).

In regard to the Chinese script introduced into Japan and its adoption, Pollack considers that:

[T]hese signs were *full* of meaning when they arrived in Japan as the medium for Confucian and Buddhist ideas that were entirely new in Japan; they were not simply an alphabet, whose sounds could easily be abstracted from the cultural complex they had once represented. Before these signs could be made to represent sound alone, they had first to be emptied of their alien significance by a mental act that attributed only a sound value to each sign and com-

³ Pollack reads this tension between oral and literate representation from the 8th to the 18th century under the register of the *wakan* 和漢 (Japanese/Chinese) dialectic. For further insights on the ‘problems’ in the history of Japanese script, as for instance, during the Meiji Period (1868-1912), see Sato Habein 1984, 99-103.

The debate on the fundamental role played by spoken and written language in constructing a national, international and personal identity is an outstanding issue in Japanese modern history (Gottlieb 2005, 1). In his seminal study, Miller (1982) provides a historical discourse on the myth and self-referentiality of nationhood in modern Japanese society, where life and language are inextricably linked. Language is seen as a “way of life” and not as a social convention (Miller 1982, 4-5).

pletely ignored its powerful semantic burden. (Pollack 1986, 35)

Shibatani ([1990] 2005, 142-53), who also considers myths created around Japanese language outside the country (89-93), underlines the common practice in Japan of borrowing words from other languages, including Ainu and Korean language:

In the domain of lexicon, successive waves of loan words resulted in a large number of doublets and sometimes triplets composed of native word, a Sino-Japanese word, and a Western word. [...] [T]hese near-synonyms are often associated with different shades of meaning or stylistic values, and the correct use of them is delicate both linguistically and *politically*. Linguistically, often the meanings of the foreign loan words are altered from the original meanings, and many expressions have been newly created in Japan by combining existing foreign words. (92; italics added)

Traditionally, the Japanese lexicon is considered in terms of its etymological strata: the native vocabulary, defined as *wago* (和語) or *yamato kotoba* (大和言葉), the loan words of Chinese origin, defined as *kango* (漢語), and words borrowed from other languages, defined as *gairaigo* (外来語) (142).

As will be illustrated in the following sections, sometimes it can be considered a political choice, when choosing one word, or one writing, in respect to the other.

2 An Etymological and Semantic Comparison of Terms Indicating the Body

The concern in this section is to display, although partially, because of its huge extent and interdisciplinary characteristics, the intricateness and complexity a scholar might encounter, if approaching a general study of terminologies that refer to the word 'body' in Japanese language.

What happens when we investigate a context where the word 'body' displays a multiplicity of definitions and an ambiguous variety of usage throughout its etymological history and coinage?

A first glance at the Japanese lexical panorama pertaining to the word 'body' is enough to provoke a reaction in whoever wants to approach the linguistics surrounding corporeality. If we compare the respective entries edited in Japanese monolingual dictionaries, slightly different interplays of semantics, characterised by a subtly interchangeable configuration of synonyms, do appear.

The *Kadokawa ruigo shinjiten* 角川類語新辞典 (Kadokawa New Dictionary of Synonyms, 1981; hereafter *KRS*) edited by Ōno Susumu and

Hamanishi Masando indicates under the corporeal category *taikaku* 体格 (physical constitution, physical status, physic, build) the first word group related to the headword 身体/人のかからだ (body/the human body). In Japanese, the compound 身体 can be read *shintai* or *karada*, and the reading of the headword 身体 is not specified, whereas its semantic description is provided with a wide definition: ‘human body’ (人のかからだ *hito no karada*). A series of terms pertaining to the ‘human body’ are correlated with this compound, to be precise, 29 + 16 + 20 definitions, i.e. 65 terms in total are listed under this category.

The first *kanji* that is classified is 体 (body) displaying the *furigana*⁴ “*karada*”, and alternative *kanji* given for this word are 軀 and 身体. The idiomatic paradigms following the *kanji* 体 are:

強い体。元来体が弱い。体を鍛える。体ばかり大きくてもからきし子供だ。お体を大切に ○頭・手足・胸などのすべてを漠然と含めた呼び方〈軀・身体〉 (Ōno, Hamanishi 1981, 504)

A strong *karada*. Have a weak constitution [*karada*] by nature. Build up one’s body [*karada*].⁵ Although he/she is big-bodied [*karada bakari ōkikute mo*], he/she is a child. Take good care of yourself/your health [*karada*]. [Meaning:] Designation that vaguely includes the head, limbs, chest, etc. as a whole.⁶

In the same dictionary the synonym *shintai* 身体 (body) is introduced by these usage paradigms:

健全な身体。身体を清潔にする。身体検査〔髪膚〕 (Ōno, Hamanishi 1981, 504)

A healthy *shintai*. Cleanse one’s *shintai*. Physical examination [lit. a medical inspection of the *shintai*]. (*Shintai*) *happu* [the whole body, lit. “body, hair and skin”].

As illustrated above, in *KRS* it is added that a substitutive word for *shintai* is *happu* 髪膚 (Ōno, Hamanishi 1981, 504), and that *happu* forms a compound with *shintai*. *Happu* is a compound word formed by *kami* 髪 (hair) and *hifu* 膚 (skin), and, although it is not often indexed in Japanese-English dictionaries, it is listed in *The New Nelson Japanese-English Character Dictionary* (Nelson 1997; hereafter *Nelson*),

⁴ Syllabic phonetic scripts (*kana*) written next to or above *kanji* (lit. Chinese characters) to indicate the pronunciation. On Japanese writing system see Shibatani [1990] (2005); Sato Habein (1984); Pollack (1986).

⁵ *Karada o kitaeru* can also be translated as ‘to get oneself into shape’, ‘to train one’s body’.

⁶ Unless otherwise stated, all translations are by the Author.

wherein is displayed the English translation “body”, “hair and skin”.

When combined with *shintai*, the word *shintai happu* means “entire human body”, “every inch of one’s body”, as indicated in the online dictionary *Weblio*.⁷

A further synonym for ‘body’ listed in *KRS* within the word group 身体/人のからだ is *nikutai* 肉体 (body). The entry *nikutai* 肉体 is illustrated by these following paradigms:

りっぱな肉体の持ち主。肉体をさいなむ。肉体美。[労働] ○生身のからだ。(Ōno, Hamanishi 1981, 504)

A person who has an admirable *nikutai*. Torture the *nikutai*. The beauty of the *nikutai*. Manual/physical labour [lit. the work of the *nikutai*]. [Meaning:] The body [からだ *karada*] of the living/raw body [生身 *namami*].

It is interesting to note that among the synonyms for ‘body’ cited in *KRS* only the term *nikutai* is opposed to the antonyms “spirit” (*seishin* 精神) and “soul” (*reikon* 靈魂), alongside a further synonym provided by *KRS* for ‘body’, *niku* 肉, which is considered in its meaning of *nikutai* in *KRS* (Ōno, Hamanishi 1981, 504).

In addition, it is important to underline that in reference to the entry *nikutai* it is also explained that “[the terms] *karada* [からだ] and *shintai* [身体] may also indicate the condition of a dressed body, whereas the [term] *nikutai* has no such usage” (Ōno, Hamanishi 1981, 504).

In reference to the morpheme *mi* 身 (body), the following examples are provided:

衣類を身に着ける [まとう]。身を粉にして働く。身を任せる ○身体 (Ōno, Hamanishi 1981, 504)

Wear clothes [lit.: put clothes on the *mi*] (put on, wear [*mi ni matō*]). Work oneself [*mi*] to the bone.⁸ Give oneself [*mi*] up (to someone or something). [Meaning:] *Shintai* [身体].

It may be said that *karada*, *shintai*, *nikutai* and *mi* are the most generic designations for ‘body’ within the rich vocabulary of synonyms, and are the most used verbal expressions in contemporary written and spoken language.

Further nouns are compiled in *KRS* under the subcategory 身体, which are indexed as the human body (*hito no karada*): *jintai* 人体 (hu-

⁷ <https://ejje.weblio.jp/content/%E8%BA%AB%E4%BD%93%E9%AB%AA%E8%86%9A>.

⁸ The idiomatic expression *mi o ko ni shite hataraku* means literally ‘work reducing the body to dust’.

man body), *jinshin* or *hitomi* 人身 (the human body, one's person); gendered definitions of the body such as *nyotai* 女体 (a woman's body),⁹ *botai* 母体 (mother's body; parent organisation);¹⁰ aged bodies such as *rōtai* 老体 (old body, an aged person), *rōku* 老軀 (old age; enfeebled body), *rōkotsu* 老骨 (old bones, old man), *rōshin* 老身 (aged body; an old person [polite]).

I dare to say that the definition par excellence, or figuratively established in its semantics for “human body” is 人体 *jintai*, literally the body (体) of a human being (人). 人体 is classified in *KRS* as a term from the literary language, i.e. as a *bunshōgo* 文章語 (word used mainly in writing). Another possible reading of 人体 furnished in *Nelson* is “*nintei*”, and “*nintei*” is translated as “personal appearance”. The *Kenkyūsha's New Japanese English Dictionary* (fifth edition, 2003; hereafter *Kenkyūsha*) indicates for *jintai* 人体 the following translations: “a [the] human body; the system; flesh”.¹¹ 人体 (*jintai*) is used, for example, to compound the terms such as *jintai kaibōgaku* 人体解剖学 (human anatomy), or *jintai jikken* 人体実験 (experiment on a human body).

Also 人身 *jinshin* covers the semantic area of ‘human body’, but it has a much more reflexive nuance, pointing at the personal, individual body, as is evidenced in *KRS* (Ōno, Hamanishi 1981, 504).

In reference to the body expressed by the word *jinshin*, it is interesting to underline that the Japanese rendering of *Habeas Corpus Act* (1679) is *Jinshin hogohō* 人身保護法.

Further words for ‘body’ listed in *KRS* under the subcategory 身体/人のからだ are: *tai* 体 (the body), *taiku* 体軀 (the body, stature, physique, constitution), the above-mentioned *niku* 肉 (body, flesh, meat),¹² *nikkai* 肉塊 (piece of flesh; the flesh, the body),¹³ *keigai* 形骸 (framework, wreck), *hadami* 肌身 (the body), *onmi* or *omi* 御身 (you [familiar]), *migara* 身柄 (one's person).

Also *bodī* ボディー, a loan word (or *gairaigo*) from the English language, therefore written in the phonetic syllabary *katakana*, is listed among the synonyms for ‘body’ in *KRS*. As indicated in this dictionary, it is used for example in compounds derived from the English such as *bodībiru* ボディービル (bodybuilding), or *bodīgādo* ボディーガード (bodyguard), and also for designating the ‘body’ of a car, a ma-

⁹ As indicated in the *Nelson* dictionary, the compound 女体 can also be read *jotai*.

¹⁰ As indicated in the *Nelson* dictionary, *botai* 母体 can also be read *motai*.

¹¹ The *Kenkyūsha* dictionary provides for *nintei* 人体 the English meanings of “personal appearance; look”.

¹² Further translations for *niku* are given below.

¹³ The *Nelson* dictionary has both readings: *nikukai* and *nikkai*. In the *Kenkyūsha* dictionary appears only the word *nikukai* translated as “a lump of meat; the human body”.

chine, a ship etc. (Ōno, Hamanishi 1981, 504).¹⁴ The *Kenkyūsha* dictionary gives the translation “a body” for ボディー.

I would like to add here the current expression *naisu bodī* ナイスボディー (nice-looking body, attractive body) often used in everyday language or in commercials for diet goods, and I dare to categorise it as a typical product of the global consuming society.

In *KRS* the semantic field of “whole body” (*zenshin* 全身) is occupied by sign-definitions such as *honemi* 骨身 (flesh and bones, marrow), *gotai* 五体 (the five component parts of the body, the whole body; the five styles of calligraphy), *zenshin* 全身 (the whole body, full-length [portrait]), *manshin* 満身 (the whole body), the above-mentioned *shintai happu* 身体髪膚, *kamishimo* 上下 (the upper and lower parts of the body; samurai garb; old ceremonial garb; the government and the people).

Zentai 全体 (the whole), often used in spoken language for indicating the whole body, is not mentioned in the section 身体/人のからだ in *KRS*.

The definitions that explicitly stress the meaning of a “living body” (*ikite iru karada* 生きているからだ) classified in *KRS* are: *seitai* 生体, *namami* 生身 and *ikimi* 生き身.

For 生体 *seitai* given examples are: “Vivisect the [living] body [*seitai*] of an animal. The experiments on the *seitai* [生体実験 *seitai jikken*]. [Meaning:] The body [からだ *karada*] of a living creature/living thing [生物 *ikimono/seibutsu*]. The living body [*ikite iru karada* 生きているからだ]” (Ōno, Hamanishi 1981, 504). The *KRS* dictionary opposes *seitai* 生体 to the antonym *shitai* 死体, the dead body. *Seitai* 生体 is translated in *Nelson* as “living body”, and in the *Kenkyūsha* dictionary as “a living body; an organism”. Here I would like to add that the rendering in Japanese of ‘somatology’ is *seitai-gaku* 生体学.

In reference to *ikimi* 生き身 the *KRS* cites the proverb *ikimi wa shi ni mi* 生き身は死に身 (all that lives must eventually die) (Ōno, Hamanishi 1981, 504). The *Kenkyūsha* dictionary offers for *ikimi* 生き身 the translations “flesh and blood; a mortal man”.

Paradigms for the entry 生身 in *KRS* are: “We flesh and blood are liable to injury. A flesh-and-blood person.”¹⁵ [Meaning:] A living *karada* [からだ]” (Ōno, Hamanishi 1981, 504).

At the entry 生身 *Nelson* offers a unified translation for both readings *i(ki)mi* and *namami*: “living flesh, flesh and blood, the quick; raw meat, raw fish”. According to the *Kenkyūsha* dictionary *namami* 生身 corresponds to “a living body, flesh and blood” in English, and *ikimi* 生き身 corresponds to “flesh and blood; raw flesh”.

¹⁴ Here we have examples of loan words altered from the original meanings or phonetics such as *bodibiru* ボディービル, as illustrated by Shibatani [1990] 2005, 92.

¹⁵ The translations for these two paradigms are taken from the *Kenkyūsha* dictionary.

On the other hand, the words cited in the KRS dictionary for the dead body considered within the subcategory 身体/人のからだ are: *shitai* 死体 (corpse, remains), *itai* 遺体 (corpse, remains), *shigai* 死骸 (corpse, remains), *nakigara* 亡骸 (remains, corpse), *mukuro* 骸 (body, corpse),¹⁶ *shikabane* 屍 (corpse, remains), *kabane* 屍,¹⁷ *shishi* 死屍 (corpse), *igai* 遺骸 [remains, corpse, (dead) body],¹⁸ *zangai* 残骸 (corpse, carcass; ruins, debris, wreck, remains of), *shirō* 屍蠟 (adipocere), *miira* 木乃伊 (mummy) (Ōno, Hamanishi 1981, 504).

The *Ruigo daijiten* 類語大辞典 (The Great Dictionary of Synonyms; hereafter *RD*), edited by Shibata Takeshi and Yamada Susumu, cites synonyms for ‘body’ and its word group under the category of *karada* からだ (Shibata, Yamada 2002, 1486-7). In reference to the entry 体 (からだ *karada*) it is explained that 体 (からだ *karada*) “supports the activity of human beings and animals”, and that it is “the entirety (全体 *zentai*) covered by the skin, and made of parts such as head, chest and limbs” (1486). At the end of the definition is annotated that the correspondent *kanji* for *karada* can also be 軀 or 身体. The same *kanji* 体 is classified next as the word *tai* タイ, employed for instance in sports jargon for designating the human body (*karada* からだ) when it is about to move (1486).

In the *Kurashi no kotoba: Shingogen jiten* 暮らしのことば 新語源辞典 (The Words of Life: New Dictionary of Etymology, 2008; hereafter *KKSJ*), edited by Yamaguchi Yoshinori, the entry for 体 (*karada* からだ) is compiled by Kubota Atsushi. Here the etymology of 体 (*karada* からだ) is first introduced as “the whole (*zentai* 全体) from the head to the tips of the feet. The whole *nikutai*” (Yamaguchi 2008, 196). It is explained that in ancient times this term was employed in order to designate, in respect to the soul (*tamashii* 魂), the body (*shintai* 身体), which hosts/contains the soul, or to address the body (*nikutai* 肉体) without life.

魂を宿した肉体はミ(身)という。つまり、カラダはミの外形の部分であった。「カラ(殻・軀)」+ダ(接尾語)「からなる語といわれる。カラは、水分・生命がすっかりなくなって抜け殻となったものの意。平安時代には、

16 In *KRS*, *mukuro* 骸 is indicated as a word from the literary language (*bungo* 文語). The *kanji* 骸 is interchangeable with its further written form 軀 (Ōno, Hamanishi 1981, 504). *Mukuro* is the Japanese reading (*kun'yomi*) of 骸, therefore designating the native term. The *kanji* 骸 can also be pronounced in its Chinese-derived reading (*on'yomi*) *gai*, not mentioned in *KRS*, but provided in *Nelson* and translated as “bone, body”.

17 This reading is not contemplated by the *Nelson* dictionary. In regard to *kabane* 屍 the *Kenkyūsha* dictionary indicates a cross reference to *shikabane* 屍 for its English translation. For *shikabane* 屍 we find a further cross reference in the *Kenkyūsha* dictionary, which is *shitai* 死体. *Shitai* 死体 is translated in the *Kenkyūsha* dictionary as “a dead body; a corpse; one’s remains; a stiff; a carcass.”

18 *Nelson* furnishes the further reading *yugai* for 遺骸, which is not mentioned in the entry of *KRS*.

蟬などが脱皮した後の抜け殻や死体などに用いられている。ナキガラ (亡骸) のカラである。(Yamaguchi 2008, 196)

The *nikutai*, in which the soul dwells, is called *mi* [ミ (身)].¹⁹ In brief, *karada* [カラダ] was the part of the outward form [*gaikei* 外形] of the *mi* [ミ]. It is said that the word stems from “*kara* [カラ (殼, 驅)] + *da* [ダ] (suffix)”.²⁰ *Kara* [カラ] meant something that had become the *exuviae* [*nukegara* 抜け殻] completely deprived of its liquids and life. It has been used during the Heian period in order to designate, for instance, the cast-off skin of the cicada after its ecdysis or the dead body [*shitai* 死体]. It is the *kara* [カラ] of *nakigara* [亡骸].

It is further explained by Kubota (Yamaguchi 2008, 196) that *karada* is thought to share the same etymon of カラ (幹, 柄), implied in the meanings of *kareeda* 枯れ枝 (stem, trunk, withered branch), as well as the same etymon of カラ (枯, 涸), which appears in *karayama* 枯山²¹ or *karatsuyu* から梅雨,²² and is linked to expressions used to define something without liquid, something dry, without substance (*jisshit-su* 実質). *Karada* also shares the same etymon of カラ (空)²³ linked to the meaning of ‘empty’ (*karappo* からっぽ) (Yamaguchi 2008, 196).

According to this entry in KKSJ, it seems that *karada* カラダ taken as a generic term has started to be used from the medieval period onwards, and that in the Japanese texts (*wabun* 和文) of the Heian period (794-1185) it has not been employed, because it is a *kanbun kundoku* 漢文訓読 (a word of the *kanbun kundoku*)²⁴ (Yamaguchi 2008, 196). Therefore, in the *Genji monogatari* 源氏物語 (The Tale of Genji, early 11th century), the *hiragana* word *kara* から appears instead of the *kanbun kundoku* word *karada* カラダ (Yamaguchi 2008, 196). In addition, Kubota (Yamaguchi 2008, 196) cites the *Nippo jisho* 日葡

19 In this sentence of the KKSJ dictionary *mi* is written in *katakana* (ミ) and then followed by the *kanji* 身 put in brackets. Here *mi* is a *kundoku*, a Japanese semantic reading of a Chinese character. For the origin of the Japanese syllabic system of *katakana* and its use in premodern practices of reading, writing and glossing ‘foreign language texts’ see Whitman et al. 2010; Sato Habein 1984, 21-4;

20 It is specified that *da* ダ is a suffix (*setsubigo* 接尾語) (Yamaguchi 2008, 196).

21 Kubota glossed the compound word 柄山 with the *furigana* “*karayama* からやま”. Other possible readings of 柄山 are *kareyama* かれやま or *kozan* こざん. The *Nelson* dictionary categorises 柄山 with the following transliteration in *rōmaji*: *ka(re)yama*. The English translation offered by *Nelson* of 柄山 is “a hill covered with dead vegetation”.

22 *Karatsuyu* is translated in *Nelson* as “dry rainy season”.

23 *Kara* 空 bears the meaning of “emptiness”.

24 *Kanbun kundoku* is, in short, the Japanese reading (*kundoku*) of a classical Chinese passage (*kanbun*) (*Kenkyūsha* dictionary 2003). On *kanbun kundoku* see Whitman et al. 2010; Sato Habein 1984, 7-24.

辞書 (Japanese-Portuguese Dictionary, 1603),²⁵ and underlines that the *Nippo jisho* offers the following explanation for *karada* 体: “sometimes also used for denoting a living body (*ikite iru karada* 生きている体)”. It is argued in the *KKSJ* that this is “probably because the separation between the soul (*tamashii* 魂) and the body (体) had been progressively reduced” (Yamaguchi 2008, 196).

The *KKSJ* dictionary presents only the entry *karada* for designating the body, whereas the *kanji* “肉 *niku*” (Yamaguchi 2008, 500) is categorised as a word that addresses the meat, the flesh of an animal. In contrast, as shown before, the *KRS* registers *niku* 肉 within the word group 身体/人のからだ, i.e. the *shintai/karada* (身体), considered as a *hito no karada* 人のからだ (the body of a person, human body) (Ōno, Hamanishi 1981, 504). The meaning of *niku* 肉 displayed in *KRS* is “the *nikutai* (in contrast to the soul)” (Ōno, Hamanishi 1981, 504).²⁶

The *Nippo jisho*, published by the Jesuit Mission Press in Nagasaki in 1603, is mentioned in many lexicographic sources.²⁷ A supplement of this dictionary has been brought out in 1604. The *Nippo jisho* and its supplement list together more than 32,000 entries. As Michael Cooper (1980, 513) underlines, its Japanese translation *Hōyaku Nippo jisho* 邦訳日葡辞書 (1980), which includes the supplement and is edited by Doi Tadao, Morita Takeshi and Chōnan Minoru, has turned into a precious linguistic document even for Japanese scholars.

In the *Hōyaku Nippo jisho* (Doi, Morita, Chōnan 1980; hereafter *HNJ*), the entry *carada* is explained first by its phonetics カラダ followed by brackets with its sinoxenetic writing 体 and then by the compound *sh-itai* 死体. A definition is added: “Sometimes also interpreted with the meaning of living body. Vulgar word” (時としては生きた身体の意味にも取られる。卑語)²⁸ (Doi et al. 1980, 100). If we compare this entry with its Portuguese compilation offered in the *Nippo jisho: Paribon. Vocabulario da lingoa de Iapam* 日葡辞書: パリ本= (1976; hereafter *Paribon*) edited by Ishizuka Harumichi, we find the following definition: “Corpo morto. Algũas uezes se toma por corpo vius. B.” (Ishizuka 1976, s.p.).

Consulting the *HNJ*, we read in reference to *shintai* the following entry:

Xintai. シンタイ (身体) Mi, catachi. (身, かたち). 肉体. (Doi et al. 1980, 773)²⁹

²⁵ The *Vocabulario da Lingoa de Iapam com declaração em Portugues, feito por alguns Padres, e Irmãos da Companhia de Iesu* is commonly known as *Nippo jisho*. For a study on the *Nippo jisho* see Cooper 1976.

²⁶ (精神に対する) 肉体 (Ōno, Hamanishi 1981, 504).

²⁷ See, for instance, Sugimoto (2005, 215) and other dictionaries mentioned below.

²⁸ *Toki toshite wa ikita shintai no imi ni mo torareru. Higo.*

²⁹ *Xintai. Shintai (shintai) Mi, catachi (mi, katachi). Nikutai.*

The synonym added to *shintai* here is more than interesting, because *katachi* means ‘form’, ‘shape’.

It is worth to point out that the entry for *shintai* 身体, in this case *xintai*, is registered in the Japanese translation, but is not indexed in the *Paribon*, where we find only the homophone *xintai* indicating the Japanese word *shintai* 神体 (Ishizuka 1976), the divine body, or god-body in a Shintō shrine, as *Nelson* has it. This means that the word has been added later in the supplement.

The word *nikutai* appears under the following register in the Portuguese edition: “*Nicutai. Corpo*” (Ishizuka 1976). On the other hand, the Japanese translation of the dictionary reads: “*Nicutai. ニクタイ(肉体) 身体*” (Doi et al. 1980, 463).³⁰

It is noteworthy that also the term *nikushin* is classified: in the *Vocabulario da lingua de Iapam* the corresponding entry is “*Nicuxin. Corpo. S.*” (Ishizuka 1976), and the dictionary translated into Japanese reads: “*Nicuxin. ニクシン (肉身) 肉体. 文書語*” (Doi et al. 1980, 463).³¹

The *Gogenkai* 語源海 (Ocean of the Origin of Words, 2005), dictionary edited by Sugimoto Tsumoto, reserves to the entry semantically embracing ‘body’ one headword: *karada* (からだ [体, 躰]). In reference to its modern usage, the term is paralleled to the compounds *nikutai* 肉体, *taishitsu* 体質,³² *taiku* 体格. The characters of the Chinese lexicon are also cited: *shēntǐ* 身体, *shēncái* 身材 (Sugimoto 2005, 215).

It is explained that *da* だ is a type of suffix that adds the meaning of “hosting a soul (*tamashii* 魂)”. *Mi* 身 is indicated as a general expression in ancient language and it is added that *karada* 體 does not appear in classical literature such as *Genji monogatari*. As a consequence, *kara* (空, 虚) was used to signify the outer form (*gaikei*) such as the word *nakigara* 亡骸 (remains, corpse) (Sugimoto 2005, 215).

A precious information given by this dictionary is the cross reference for *mukuro* ムクロ indicated in the etymological explanation for *karada* (Sugimoto 2005, 215-16). *Mukuro* is prevalingly provided as a word standing for the dead body, as we have seen in *KRS*,³³ but it is also a word employed generically for ‘body’.³⁴ In the *Gogenkai* it is specifically argued that it may be that in ancient times the word *mukuro* ムクロ indicated the body of a living person (Sugimoto 2005, 215).

The *Karada kotoba jiten* からだことば辞典 (Dictionary of Body Words, 2003; hereafter *KKJ*) edited by Tōgō Yoshio, explains that *mi* 身 is used frequently for compound words corresponding to body

³⁰ *Nicutai. Nikutai (nikutai) shintai.*

³¹ *Nicuxin. Nikushin (nikushin) nikutai. Bunshōgo.* ‘Bunshōgo’ means ‘literary word’.

³² *Taishitsu* is translated in *Nelson* as “physical constitution”.

³³ Ōno, Hamanishi 1981, 504.

³⁴ Cf. *Nihon kokugo daijiten* (2001).

(*mi* 身) and body (*karada* 体), to body (身) and mind (*kokoro* 心). However, it cannot be said that *mi* and *karada* are synonyms (*dōgi* 同義), and that *mi* and *kokoro* are counterparts (Tōgō 2003, 260). *Mi* (身) is characterised by the meaning of *karada* (体) taken as a *nikutai*, and also signifies the body entailing social responsibilities as an individual (Tōgō 2003, 260). The first semantic definition provided by *KKJ* for *mi* 身 is “*hito no karada* 人のからだ” (human body), followed by the definition “*身体 shintai*” (Tōgō 2003, 260).

Shintai 身体, listed in *KKJ* as a compound of *mi* (身), is defined as the “human body” (Tōgō 2003, 265).

In reference to the entry *karada* (からだ/体), the first definition provided in *KKJ* is “the *nikutai* of a human being and an animal” (Tōgō 2003, 276).

The *Kōjien* 広辞苑 (Wide Garden of Words; sixth edition [1955] 2007) edited by Shinmura Izuru classifies *karada* からだ (体) as a word (*go* 語) for the body taken in its unity from the head to the feet (Shinmura [1955] 2007, 597). It is also defined with the synonyms 身体 (*shintai*) and 体軀 (*taiku*; the body, stature, physique, constitution).

In the same dictionary *shintai* しんたい (身体) is explained as *karada* からだ and 体軀 *taiku* (Shinmura [1955] 2007, 1456).

The *Kōjien* defines the word *nikutai* にくたい (肉体) as “[t]he *shintai* made of flesh [*niku* 肉]. The *karada* [体] of a living human being. The *karada* [からだ] of a living body [なまみ]. A *nikushin* [肉身]” (Shinmura [1955] 2007, 2124).³⁵ The same dictionary gives for the word *nikushin* にくしん (肉身) the definition “the same as *nikutai*” (2123).

I noticed that the entry *nikushin* does not appear, for instance, as a synonym in the list compiled in *KRS*. Also the *Kenkyūsha* dictionary does not contemplate it, whereas in *Nelson* the word *nikushin* is translated as “the flesh, the body; kindred, blood relationship”.

The *Nihon kokugo daijiten* 日本国語大辞典 (Great Dictionary of Japanese National Language; second edition [1972] 2001; hereafter *NKDJ*),³⁶ the largest monolingual dictionary of Japanese language, defines the word *karada* からだ (体・軀・身体) as “the *nikutai* of a human being and of an animal” (*NKDJ* [1972] 2001, 1081). Following explanations concerning *karada* are given: 1a) “The *nikutai* taken as something that hosts the ‘soul’. The body (*nikutai*) including all parts such as head, chest and limbs” (*NKDJ* [1972] 2001, 1081).

35 肉から成った身体。生きている人間の体。なまみのからだ。肉身 (*Niku kara natta shintai. Ikte iru ningen no karada. Namami no karada. Nikushin*).

36 Gottlieb (2005, 15) points at the two ways of defining Japanese language: the term *kokugo* (language of our country, our language) and *nihongo* (language of Japan). The former is used by native speakers and designates in the school system the Japanese language classes and textbooks destined for the Japanese. The language taught to foreigners or outside Japan is called *nihongo*, as promoted by Japan Foundation since the 1970s (Gottlieb 2005, 15).

An explanation that is added in this dictionary is that *karada* can be defined as the *nikutai* that for instance has temporarily lost consciousness or is sleeping (NKDJ [1972] 2001, 1081).

In reference to the acceptance 1a), the dictionary presents paradigmatic literary excerpts from *Ishiyamadera hon hokeyō gansen Heian chūki ten* 石山寺本法華經玄贊平安中期点 (Buddhist Scripture of Ishiyama Temple Mid-Heian period, ca. 950), *Shiga nikkai* 四河入海 (Four Rivers Flowing into the Sea) (1534), *Zōhyō monogatari* 雑浜物語 (The Tale of Miscellaneous Footmen, 1683), *Aguranabe* 安愚楽鍋 (Idle Talks in the Sukiyaki House, 1871) by Kanagaki Robun 仮名垣魯文 (1829-1894), *Seinen* 青年 (Young Men, 1911-1912) by Mōri Ogai 森鷗外 (1862-1922) (NKDJ [1972] 2001, 1081).

Further given acceptations for *karada* are: 1b) “the *nikutai* that is left (behind) after death and the loss of the soul” (NKDJ [1972] 2001, 1081); 2) the *dōtai* 胴体;³⁷ 3) the physical condition, health (NKDJ [1972] 2001, 1081).

One of its etymological explanations is that *karada* is an abbreviation of *karadachi* 軀立 (NKDJ [1972] 2001, 1081).

The NKDJ cites in reference to *shintai* しんたい (身体), pointing out that its ancient reading was also *shindai* しんだい, the following explanation:

人間のからだ。肉体。体軀(たいく)。身(み)しんてい。(NKDJ [1972] 2001, 658)

The *karada* of a human being. The *nikutai*. The *taiku*. The *mi*. The *shintei*.

Literary examples are offered from the *Man'yōshū* 万葉集 (Collection of a Myriad Leaves, VIII century), *Kanchi'inbon sanbōe* 観智院本三宝絵 (Illustration of the Three Jewels Kanchi'in Manuscript, 984) by Minamoto Tamenori 源為憲 (?-1011), *Nippo jisho, Tōsei shosei katagi* 当世書生氣質 (The Character of Today's Students, 1885-1886) by Tsubouchi Shōyō 坪内逍遙 (1859-1935), *Yōgaku dokuhon* 幼学読本 (A Reader for Young Science, 1887) by Nishimura Tei 西邨貞 (1854-1904) (NKDJ [1972] 2001, 658).

In NKDJ the entry *nikutai* にくたい (肉体) is introduced by the following definitions:

なま身のからだ。肉によってできている身体。からだ。肉身。うつしみ。また、性的欲望の対象としてのからだ。(NKDJ [1972] 2001, 403)

37 *Dōtai* means the trunk, the torso (of an animal), but can also be used for indicating the body.

The *karada* of the *namami*. The *shintai* made of flesh [*niku* 肉]. The *karada* [からだ]. The *nikushin*. The *utsushimi*. In addition, the body (*karada*) considered as an object of sexual desire.

Utsushimi is defined in the *NKDJ* as “the same as *utsusemi*”. The *Kenkyūsha* dictionary translates *utsushimi* as “this present body, this (one’s) present existence; this mortal frame; this world (life); temporal things. A cicada; the cast-off skin of a cicada”.

The first literary paradigm for *nikutai* cited in *NKDJ* is the Japanese abridged translation of Thomas à Kempis’ *De imitatione Christi et contemptu omnium vanitatum mundi*, entitled *Shayoroku* 捨世録 (1596), wherein the word *nicutaiuo* (ニクタイウ) appears.

The following example is taken from *Saikoku risshi hen* 西国立志編 (1877),³⁸ the translation by Nakamura Masanao 中村正直 (1832-1891) of Samuel Smiles’ *Self-Help* (1859). Other paradigms for *nikutai* are sentences from Fukuzawa Yukichi’s 福澤諭吉 (1835-1901) *Bunmeiron no gairyaku* 文明之概略 (An Outline of a Theory of Civilisation, 1875), Natsume Sōseki’s 夏目漱石 (1867-1916) *Kusamakura* 草枕 (The Three Cornered World, 1906), Dazai Osamu’s 太宰治 (1909-1948) *Hashire merosu* 走れメロス (Run, Melos!, 1940) (*NKDJ* [1972] 2001, 403).

Mi み (身) is defined by the *NKDJ* as the “*karada* of a human being and of other animals. The *shintai*. The *nikutai*” (*NKDJ* [1972] 2001, 594).

2.1 Ichikawa Hiroshi’s Analysis of *mi*: An Alternative to Phenomenology

As mentioned in the introduction, alongside the etymons provided by the monolingual dictionaries, the illustrated terms related to ‘body’ may gain further singular nuances that change from author to author, artist to artist, when these words are inserted in a certain discussion.

Therefore, in order to highlight the complex lexical system and its multi-layered readings, in the following sections are presented examples of discourses concerning corporeality offered by Ichikawa Hiroshi and Uno Kuniichi. Rather than investigating philosophical insights in the strict sense, the aim in these sections is to illustrate the ways these terms are sensed, perceived and employed by the single authors, and the hybrid dimension intrinsic to the polysemous character of corporeality.

In his *Mi’ no kōzō: Shintairon o koete* (身) の構造: 身体論を超えて (The Structure of ‘mi’: Beyond the Theory on the *shintai* [1993] 2007), Ichikawa Hiroshi presents a further panorama of analysis and lexi-

³⁸ The publishing year of the *Saikoku risshi hen* indicated in *NKDJ* is 1870-71 (*NKDJ* [1972] 2001, 403).

cal diversification that helps to understand how in Japanese philosophy the discourse on the body unfolds as an alternative possibility of methodology.

First of all, it is important to underline that the gravitational point in Ichikawa's thought shifts from the *shintairon* 身体論, the theory/theories on the corporeality called *shintai* 身体, to the *miron* 身論, the theory on the corporeality called *mi* 身. The *shintairon* includes a vast range of theories on the body or discourses on the body developed in the last century. Especially during the 1970s, these theories have been widely influenced by Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology,³⁹ when the term *shintai* definitely emerged as a protagonist among its synonyms to denote the 'body' in philosophical and sociological terms.⁴⁰

It appears evident that Ichikawa signals the necessity of also rethinking phenomenology by suggesting a path for remapping the thought that addresses the body, and its constitutional elements of hermeneutics and epistemology.

In introducing his discussion on the structure of *mi* 身, Ichikawa explains the reason he chose this word instead of *shintai* 身体, which, according to the philosopher, is loaded with the history of the body-mind dualism:

ここで「身体」でなくて「身」という言葉を使いましたのは、「身体」という言葉はどうしても「精神」という言葉と対立するものとして考えられるし、英語のボディとマインドを連想させます。そうすると、ヨーロッパ流のマインド-ボディという二分法に拘束されたものの考え方と、それにもとづいた理論の歴史をひきずってしまう。(Ichikawa [1993] 2007, 78)

I used the word *mi* [身] and not *shintai* [身体] here because the word *shintai* is inevitably considered in opposition to the word *seishin* [精神, mind], and because it leads us towards an association with the English words body [ボディ] and mind [マインド].

In doing so, one ends up by dragging a way of thinking restrained by the European-style mind-body dichotomy, and the history of theories based on this dichotomy.

39 Important philosophers who exerted their influence on Japanese *shintairon* are, among others, Edmund Husserl and Henri Bergson. In contemporary thought the prevailing influence is exerted by Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari and Giorgio Agamben.

40 One of the principal concerns in my research (see, for instance, Centonze 2018a) is the passage in cultural, artistic, aesthetic, critical and literary discourses from the 1960s' "age of the *nikutai*", as defined, for instance, by Ueno Kōshi (1989), to the 1970s' "age of the *shintai*". Some problems of the phenomenological theory in relation to the vast domain of corporealities in Hijikata's writing and dancing practice are discussed in Centonze 2018b.

Noteworthy in this passage is the use of the term *bodi* ボディ (body)⁴¹ in order to designate the ‘body’ displayed in “European-style” thought. The same might be said of the term *maindo* マインド (mind).

A further detail I would like to stress is that, according to Ichikawa, the word *shintai* may stand in opposition to *seishin*, whereas we have seen above that, according to some dictionaries, such as *KRS*, the antonym for *seishin* is *nikutai*.

Ichikawa ([1993] 2007, 79) affirms that the *yamato kotoba* 大和言葉⁴² *mi* (*mi*; in this case written in *hiragana*) is endowed with a broad meaning and, when connected with the *kango* 漢語⁴³ *mi* (身), it eventually spreads its semantic area further.

Ichikawa (79) proposes that *mi* 身

1. expresses very well the dynamics of our concrete living *shintai*;
2. carries within it the possibility of a categorisation that differs from the binomial schematisation between spirit (*seishin* 精神) and body (*buttai* 物体), or spirit (*seishin*) and body (*shintai* 身体).

Here we encounter a further term that may be used to indicate the body, not included in the aforementioned list of synonyms for the human body registered by *KRS* or in the other dictionaries of synonyms: *buttai* 物体, which means “a body; a physical solid; an object; a substance; a material object”, as *Kenkyūsha* has it.

Ichikawa (79) explicitly stresses that it is not his intention to force the spread of a nativist spirit of Japan (*nihonshugifū* 日本主義風) by addressing a special category linked to a special national language (*kokugo* 国語) called ‘Japanese language’, but that he senses *mi* 身 as a universal category. In Ichikawa’s view (79), the category of *mi* expresses our concrete being in a better way, if compared to the word *bodi* ボディ and other similar words. As a consequence, the philosopher’s (79) aim is to explore the possibility of systemising the body in an order that does not pertain to dualism.

Ichikawa (80) lists several ways of usage and acceptations in Japanese of the word *mi* 身.

1. *mi* 身 and *mi* 実 probably share the same root with *mi* 実, which means ‘fruit’, ‘seed’, ‘berry’, and therefore indicate a natural existence filled with content (*nakami* 中身, i.e. lit. ‘the body inside’) and substance (*naiyō* 内容).
2. The second acceptance of *mi* 身 is ‘the flesh (*niku* 肉) without life’, as in the expression *sakana no kirimi* (魚の切身), which means ‘slices of fish’ (*kirimi*, lit. ‘cut, chopped body/fish’), or *su de sa-*

⁴¹ Both phonetics, *bodī* ボディー and *bodi* ボディ, are used in Japanese.

⁴² A word of Japanese origin, thus not written in *kanji*.

⁴³ A Japanese word originally derived from Chinese, thus written in *kanji*.

kana no mi o shimeru (酢で魚の身をしめる), which means “marinate with vinegar the ‘flesh/meat’ of the fish”.

3. The third semantic area occupied by *mi* 身 is the carnal body (*nikutai* 肉体) endowed with natural life (*tōzen seimei* 当然生命). Ichikawa (80) mentions the example of the expressions *mibushi ga itamu* (身節が痛む, the joints ache) and *oshiri no mi* (お臀の肉, the flesh/body of the backside).

Here it is important to note that in this latter example we are confronted with a further characteristic of Japanese written language, the *ateji* (lit. ‘assigned character’),⁴⁴ which is produced when *kanji* are arbitrarily associated with completely different pronunciations, thus changing semantic nuance in different contexts: the *kanji* of 肉, which normally reads *niku*, appears in this case with the attributive reading *mi*.

4. *Mi* 身 may reflect slightly more than *niku* 肉 the sense of a living body, the *ikimi* 生き身, therefore its meaning may coincide with the living body (*ikite iru karada* 生きているからだ) as a whole. In this acceptance, Ichikawa offers the paradigm “being pregnant, and as a result give birth to a child” (*mimochi ni natte, sono kekka mi futatsu ni naru* 身もちになって、その結果身二つになる)⁴⁵ (80).
5. Since the living body (*ikimi* 生き身) manifests different modes of being, *mi* may be associated with the pluralistic modes of being of the body (*karada* からだ) as, for example, in the expression ‘writhe’ (*mimodaesuru* 身もだえする) and “take an oblique stance; assume a diagonal stance against one’s opponent” (*hanmi ni kamaeru* 半身にかまえる). Ichikawa (80-1) explains that in this case *mi* displays the *mizama* 身様, a word that designates the state of being, the conditions, aspect, situation, circumstance of the body.
6. Here Ichikawa (81) argues that “since people (*ningen*) are not naked, and put on their body (*mi ni tsukeru* 身につける)⁴⁶ several items, *mi* indicates the clothes one wears or something one wears on one’s body as an accessory”.⁴⁷
7. *Mi* is linked to the concrete living of a person, and its meaning is correlated to life (*seimei* 生命) and its incomparable value.

⁴⁴ The *Kenkyūsha* dictionary defines *ateji* as a *kanji* “used as a phonetic symbol rather than for its meaning; an arbitrarily used substitute character”.

⁴⁵ *Mi futatsu ni naru* means lit. ‘become two bodies’.

⁴⁶ *Mi ni tsukeru* means literally ‘to apply (something) onto one’s body’. A further meaning of *mi ni tsukeru* is ‘to learn’, ‘to acquire knowledge’. See also other expressions below that denote the strict link between knowledge and the body.

⁴⁷ Given examples are *mitake* 身丈 (the length of a kimono minus the collar), or *migurumi* 身ぐるみ (all one has; all one’s possessions) (81).

8. Ichikawa (81) argues that in this sense *mi* is strictly linked to society, because the living existence is achieved concretely within society. Therefore, he states, *mi* signifies the social living existence, thus the existence linked to quotidian life and work (as in case of the expression *miuri* 身売り, used for ‘prostitute oneself’).
9. The following passage in Ichikawa’s (81) speculation is related to the self within a social system, thus *mi* leads to linguistic constructions such as *mitsukara/mizukara* 身つから (自ら), i.e. ‘oneself’. Therefore, we may find it in relation to personal thoughts, to one’s own advantage and to a sort of individual freedom in respect to others, such as in the expression *mi no tame* 身のため, which means ‘for oneself; for one’s own good’
10. Ichikawa (81-2) considers that, since the grammatical category of person (*ninshō* 人称) displays a variety of selves, *mi* also takes the rank of various persons. In brief, *mi* signifies the self which is multi-layered in its grammatical person. For example, *midomo* 身ども means ‘I’, *migara* 身が等 is used to indicate the personal pronoun ‘we’. This self is certainly considered to be inserted into a social system, and Ichikawa suggests the 11th typology of *mi* as the socialised self, giving the example of *miuchi* 身内 (relative, family), an expression that displays blood relationship (*ketsuen* 血縁) or a shared territorial bond (*chien* 地縁). The 12th aspect of *mi*, viewed as a socialised self, is the social role or position such as in the expression *mi no hodo* 身のほど (one’s social position; one’s place), or *mi o tateru* 身をたてる, which means to ‘establish oneself in life’ (82).

The 13th aspect proposed by the philosopher (82-3) is that *mi* can be in a synonymic relation with *kokoro* 心, as for example in the locution *mi ni shimiru* 身にしみる, used when something soaks into the body or into the heart/inside, when someone is moved by something, or perceives a piercing cold; indeed, in these cases one can use as well the expression *kokoro ni shimiru* 心にしみる. Nevertheless, Ichikawa (83) lays emphasis on the former expression, which has a stronger impact, because it works on the conscious as well as on the unconscious level. The same is if we compare the expression *kokoro o awasu* 心をあわす (to be in harmony, to be connected) to *mi o awasu* 身をあわす, which expresses a broader experience, because it carries the nuance of becoming a unit that includes the whole body and the whole spirit (*zenshin zenrei* 全身全霊).⁴⁸ As a consequence, and this is suggested as the 14th meaning, *mi* is understood as the existence in its totality (*zentaizonzai* 全体存在), an entirety which embraces the corporeal

⁴⁸ On the connection between *mi* and *ki* see Ichikawa (83-8).

sphere without excluding the spiritual/mental one, as in the expression *mi o motte shiru* 身をもって知る (know first-hand) (83).⁴⁹

In conclusion, Ichikawa (84) states that the English word ‘body’ (ボディ) and the Japanese word *karada* からだ are *monostratum*-words, which implies that, for Ichikawa, *mi* 身 is endowed with a multi-layered character. It is stressed that the English word ‘body’ (ボディ) has the meaning of *buttai* 物体, and also of *buttaitekinashintai* 物体的な身体 (a solid/material/physical human body), and that the Japanese term *karada* からだ is strictly linked to the *kara* 殻 (a hull, a shell, a pod)⁵⁰ in *momigara* 粃殻 (hull rice),⁵¹ to something dry like the stem, to the body without life, to the corpse, and to the emptiness (84).

2.2 Translating Corporeality (?)

As Ichikawa has introduced, it seems not easy to find the proper correspondences in foreign languages for the diverse definitions of corporeality coined in Japanese.

The ambiguity pertaining to the usage of body-terms in Japanese culture is all the more evident when we try to translate aesthetic or philosophical texts centred on corporeality.

Since it is not my intention to specifically address in this article the complex translational problems implied when approaching writings dealing with several terms for ‘body’,⁵² I would like to simply list here and confront the translations offered in the Japanese-English dictionaries *Nelson* and *Kenkyūsha*.

For the compound 身体, the *Nelson* dictionary offers the two readings *shintai* and *karada*, followed by the translation “the body”.

The translation given by the *Kenkyūsha* dictionary for *shintai* 身体 is “the body; the person; the system”, and for *shintai no* 身体の, “bodily; physical; corporal”.

The compound 肉体 *nikutai* is rendered in English by the *Nelson* dictionary as “the flesh, the body”.

⁴⁹ *Mi o motte shiru* indicates the knowledge based on personal/corporeal experience. It should be underlined that many expressions of knowledge and memory are composed with the terms *mi*, *karada* and *shintai*.

⁵⁰ The online dictionary *Weblio* provides for the same *kanji* also the reading *gara*, translated as “chicken (stock) bones; a chicken carcass; 2) poor-quality coke; 3) leftovers; remnants; remains”.

⁵¹ The *Kenkyūsha* dictionary provides for *momigara* the translations “chaff; rice hulls, rice husks”.

⁵² For the rendering of some definitions for ‘body’, see my discussions and translations, for instance, in Centonze 2018a; 2020.

According to the *Kenkyūsha* dictionary, *nikutai* 肉体 means “the flesh; the body; the outer man; one’s physique”, and *nikutai no* 肉体の means “corporeal; carnal; fleshly; bodily; physical; sensual”.

A further analysis of the English translations for the single sign-components that constitute the words *shintai* and *nikutai* gives us information also about the rendering and semantic area of *mi* and *karada*:

体

The *Nelson* dictionary lists in reference to this sign the *on’yomi* (the Chinese style reading of a character) “*tai*” translated as “the body; substance; object; reality; style, form; image counter”.

The *kanji* 体 can also be pronounced *tei*, and symbolises “appearance, air; condition, state, form”. The verb *taisuru* means “obey, comply with; keep in mind”. The substantive *karada*, that is to say its *kun’yomi* (the Japanese style reading of a character), is translated as “body; health”.

The *Kenkyūsha* dictionary offers for *karada* the translations “a body; the [one’s] (whole) body; the [one’s] trunk [torso]; the body”.

身

The *Nelson* dictionary classifies this sign with the *on’yomi* “*shin*”, and the *kun’yomi* “*mi*” and “*karada*”. The translations presented are: “body; person; the quick; one’s station in life; self; heart, soul, mind; ability; flesh, meat; life; blade; container; garment width”. The verb *mijirogu* is rendered in its English translation as “stir (oneself) slightly” and the substantive *migonashi* “deportment”.

Mi is rendered in the *Kenkyūsha’s New Japanese-English Dictionary* as “1) one’s body [person]; 2) (one’s) self, oneself; 3) status, position; 4) feeling, heart; 5) meat; 6) the body (of a container)”.

肉

The sign 肉, also written 宀, is categorised in the *Nelson* dictionary (1997, 893) under the *on’yomi* “*niku*” and is translated as “flesh, muscles; meat; the flesh; seal pad, ink pad; thickness, succulence”. A further reading is the *kun’yomi* “*shishi*”, translated as “muscles; meat”. It is specified, that today the sign 宀 is only read *shishi*.

According to the *Kenkyūsha* dictionary, *niku*, means “flesh; muscles; (superfluous) flesh; flab; 2) meat; fish; game; 3) flesh; pulp; 4) the flesh; 5) thickness; 6) (wealth of) content; 7) sealing ink; an ink pad”.

3 *Shintai* and the Questions Generated by Corporeality

In his study “2001 nen noshintai 2001”, Uno Kuniichi (2000), disciple and translator of Gilles Deleuze, suggests the problems that *shintai* generates, and the complexity hidden behind the translation into foreign language of the words *shintai*, *karada* and *nikutai*.

The scholar begins his interrogation on the body from his own body. Uno (2000, 17-18) first observes what he has in front of his eyes, thus starting from a visual perspective. While sitting in front of his desk, he sees his hands on the keyboard typing the essay on the body, i.e. on the *shintai* 身体.⁵³ These hands seem to be his own hands and to belong to his *shintai*. He also acknowledges the body-parts, such as the thighs and abdomen, which are not concealed under the desk and are visible to him (18). The philosopher states that “[h]ere is my *shintai* and this *shintai* is writing” (18), and adds that his body (*shintai*) is urged by his consciousness (*ishiki* 意識) to write. This consciousness is melted into the *shintai*. He knows that he cannot separate himself from the body, but at the same time it is dismembered, because he abruptly feels the typing hands as if detached from his body, in other words he grasps his body as the object of investigation (*taishō* 対象) (18). Uno affirms that he is the body, and he is not the body.⁵⁴

I am the body [*shintai* 身体], and I am not. When I say “my” body, it is as if the body that ‘belongs’ to me is distinguished from myself. Though, I cannot think that I can exist only as a soul/spirit [*tamashii* 魂] without my body. I am neither more nor less than this body. However, I am by no means this body itself, and between me and the body there is always a sort of chasm.

I wonder if this chasm is the spirit/mind [*seishin* 精神] or the consciousness. (18)

Uno (18) further assumes that it is also impossible that the mind and the consciousness are the same, and suggests that the distance in between may be called the body (*shintai*).

It is evident that the personal pronoun ‘I’ (*watashi* 私) becomes fundamental to Uno’s discourse, although projected into a perspective of *Verfremdung*.

⁵³ Observing and sensing one’s body, while writing on the body, is a common issue also in dance studies related to the concept of “bodily writing”. As Foster (2010, 291) highlights, “[a] body, whether sitting writing or standing thinking or walking talking or running screaming, is a bodily writing. Its habits and stances, gestures, and demonstrations, every action of its various regions, areas, and parts - all these emerge out of cultural practices, verbal or not, that construct corporeal meaning.”

⁵⁴ I intentionally respect here the Japanese sentence-construction, where the possessive pronoun is not used.

At the same time Uno (18-19) creates a sort of distance between him and the theory on the body stating that he is interested in and surprised by it, but that he also has a suspicion about the “so-called *shintairon*” and its specialists. What he tries to investigate is the reason why the *shintai* becomes such a problem. A series of questions follow:

Why on earth does the body [*shintai* 身体] become such a problem? And, what on earth is the *shintai* that becomes a problem? What kind of body [*shintai*] is it? Is it an object of investigation to this degree? Or, if we consider that the *shintai* is not a simple object, then how should we define what its substance/reality [*jittai* 実体] is? (18-19; italics added)

According to Uno (19), the only one who knows his/her *shintai* is oneself, who coexists with the *shintai*. Nevertheless, without scientific knowledge, we do not know our body as a doctor or a biologist does. At the same time, it is impossible to know exhaustively the *shintai* both from the outside and from the inside (19). He states that “the *shintai* is neither inside of me, nor outside of me”.

At this point the philosopher mentions three denominations of the body, that “nearly anyone might sense”: *shintai* 身体, *nikutai* 肉体 and *karada* からだ. He argues that, depending on the point of view, the *shintai* is our “everything”. As maintained by Uno (19), while it is in a “unity” (*ittai* 一体) with the soul (*tamashii* 魂), spirit (*seishin* 精神), mind (*kokoro* 心) and emotions (*kanjō* 感情), it is also independent. This makes it that the living *shintai* (*ikita shintai* 生きた身体), ours and that of the others (*tasha* 他者), cannot be a mere object of investigation or “object” (*kyakutai* 客体) for us and for others. There is the other (alter) called “my *shintai*” (*watashi no shintai* 私の身体), and this other has further others (19).

Consulting the etymon for *corps* in a French dictionary, i.e. “la partie matérielle des êtres animés”,⁵⁵ the Japanese philosopher expresses his enthusiastic admiration, because, as he puts it, this definition fits the material part of the *shintai* (19). However, Uno also adds that the burdensome point is “that the *shintai* is an animated being/lived existence (*‘ikita’ sonzai* 「生きた」存在) (19). Since it is a living/animated material (*ikita busshitsu* 生きた物質), and a lived one (*ikirarete iru* 生きられている), it refuses to be captured as a part and resists being made an object of investigation.

Uno individuates the problems in verbally designating the *shintai*, which is actually lacking, or lost, or lost from sight. It is not ap-

⁵⁵ The definition is translated by Uno (19) in Japanese in the following way: “*ikita sonzai no busshitsuteki bubun* 生きた存在の物質的部分”.

propriately thought (20). In brief, Uno argues, that it is cursed. As he writes, “[t]hen, it is made roaming in the chain of consumption and exchange, after being dressed with the values of pleasure, health and beauty” (20). Actually, we do not know what we are questioning, when we talk about the *shintai*, and the reason why we are investigating it is not understood as well (20).

In order to demonstrate that the unity between the mind and the body has also been affirmed in European philosophical tradition, Uno (20) quotes from Kudō Kisaku’s and Saitō Hiroshi’s translation (*Etika エティカ*, 1980) the *propositio* 2 included in the third part “De origine et natura affectuum” of Baruch Spinoza’s *Ethica* (1677)⁵⁶ and other statements concerning the body that appear in this section. It is interesting to note here that the Latin word *corpus* employed in Spinoza’s treatise is translated as *shintai* 身体 in Japanese, and that *mens* is rendered in Japanese *seishin* 精神. By shifting then the attention to Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (1882; 1887) (*Yorokobashiki chishiki* 悦ばしき知識, translated by Shida Shōzō and published in 1993), in the wake of the re-reading of philosophical tradition by his mentor Gilles Deleuze, Uno introduces Nietzsche’s thought as a “more direct way of talking about the *nikutai*”. The quoted passage regards the misunderstanding produced by philosophical history concerning the ‘body’ denounced by Nietzsche, who in this case refers to the particular German term *Leib*.⁵⁷ In relation to this specific context and thought, the Japanese translation by Shida presents the word *nikutai* 肉体 for *Leib*.

It is here that Uno (2000, 22) affirms that also in European philosophy, interrogations about the *shintai* or *nikutai* have been developed. Nevertheless, he encloses in parentheses the question of whether the translation of *shintai* and *nikutai*, or the Japanese translations of the foreign terms, might generate a difference of nuance and further problems. Some reflections on the contraposition between *shintai* and *seishin* follow.

In any case, it is clear to Uno (22) that neither Spinoza nor Nietzsche try to understand the body from a materialistic perspective.

⁵⁶ The *propositio* 2 by Spinoza cites: “Nec corpus mentem ad cogitandum nec mens corpus ad motum neque ad quietem nec ad aliquid (si quid est) aliud determinare potest” (<http://www.ethicadb.org/pars.php?parid=3&lanid=3&lg=en&PHPSESSID=dc63f91c0daf8a05f843f4fbd30d3c0c>).

⁵⁷ “[...] und oft genug habe ich mich gefragt, ob nicht, im Grossen gerechnet, Philosophie bisher überhaupt nur eine Auslegung des Leibes und ein Missverständnis des Leibes gewesen ist. Hinter den höchsten Werthurteilen, von denen bisher die Geschichte des Gedankens geleitet wurde, liegen Missverständnisse der leiblichen Beschaffenheit verborgen, sei es von Einzelnen, sei es von Ständen oder ganzen Rassen” (Friedrich Nietzsche, “Vorrede zur zweiten Ausgabe”, Punkt 2) <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/FW>).

Some general considerations on *shintai*, *nikutai* and *karada* are given by Uno (23).

The first clarification made, is that, in reference to *karada*, the word *shintai* is preferred over *nikutai* when the discourse concerns the philosophical realm (23). I would like to argue that this enunciation implies that the word *karada* may indicate the term ‘body’ in a broader sense with respect to the other two words.

In brief, Uno (23) tries to categorise these three corporealities in the following way (cf. Centonze 2018a, 24-5):

1) *Nikutai* 肉体:

is on the organic side and adjacent to flesh. Uno (23-4) suggests that it corresponds to the French etymon *chair*, which also refers to *niku*.

2) *Shintai* 身体:

belongs, according to Uno (24), rather to the category of object/solid (*buttai* 物体) and assumes, in a certain sense, a neutral and inorganic aspect. The scholar mentions the possible French translation *corps*.

Uno (24) states that it is certain that *shintai* and *nikutai* are basically employed as synonyms, therefore, by no means are these words rigorously distinguished or separated. He further states that, when we question the *shintai*, we inquire after the *nikutai* at the same time. In any case, he concludes, it is not self-evident what *shintai* means or is.

3) *Karada* からだ:

might correspond to both *nikutai* as well as to *shintai*.

Uno (24) suggests that *karada* moves in an oscillating way between the former and the latter, while embracing more *shintai* rather than the *nikutai*. The term *karada* is always written in *hiragana* in Uno's text. As a consequence, he implicitly employs the *wago* からだ (term of Japanese origin) in this essay and not its corresponding *kanji* 体.

In addition, it seems that we think that by means of the term *shintai*, rather than by means of the word *nikutai*, we are able to consider the “*karada*” within a slightly wider amplitude and context, but, after all, the swaying of our thought concerning the *karada* is contained in the difference between these two words. (Uno 2000, 24)

Furthermore, Uno stresses that at the very least we cannot avoid the intricateness of the question, because even if we try to look for the exact and precise meaning, the Japanese term からだ originally signifies the *shitai* 死体 (the dead body).

From the philosopher's statement emerges a thin frontier that divides *karada*, *shintai* and *nikutai* and makes their meaning and use ambiguously differentiated and diversified. This is further an intrinsic characteristic of the Japanese language that tends to be more connotative and contextual than denotative.

Thus, paradoxically, we can say that there is a difference, and at the same time there is not.

4 An Open Conclusion

The more one deepens the discourse on the body in Japan, the more one discovers the paradoxical nexus between the hypertrophic differentiation operated in its cultural system and the ambiguity intrinsically preserved. On one side this system unfolds a highly potentiated specialisation and specification in productions of signs and words in reference to corporeality, while on the other side it invigorates and fosters the actual impossibility of distinction of something that seems to be culturally ungraspable and not fixable by language. We may say that the reduction of complexity operated within the Japanese cultural system is at the same time an augmentation and amplification of the ambiguity, vagueness, equivocalness and obliqueness by which it is characterised.

Nevertheless, this diversified lexical treasure that surrounds, sustains and recreates bodies should draw attention to the central position occupied by corporeality itself in Japanese culture, where the body/bodies emerge as a catalyst of cultural production.

This is all the more evident when we approach the body in performance practices, as well as in aesthetic texts.

With regard to this, an enlightening example is Hijikata Tatsumi's construction of diverse corporealities in performance, his exploration and challenge of the notion of bodies and knowledge that are enhanced by the diversification of corporealities in his performative and corporeal writing practice (Centonze 2020).

I would like to conclude by opening a further space of reflection and introduce here some insights offered by critic and playwright Kan Takayuki.

Kan (1983) defines the theory on the body, i.e. *shintairon*, as follows:

Shintairon is the theory [*ron* 論] 'of' the *karada* [からだ] 'about' the *karada* [からだ] [made] 'by' the *karada* [からだ]. *Shintairon* should be a theory in which the *karada* [からだ] is the subject of theory, and in which the *karada* [からだ] is also the object of theory. (Kan 1983, 11)

In Kan's view, it is relevant to give with one's own body (*mi o motte* 身を以て) a clear philosophical meaning to knowledge and percep-

tion, as well as to the act (*kōi* 行為), and at the same time, to clarify the states of existence based on bodily cognisance and acts. With regard to this, he adds, it does not make much sense to choose between ontology (*sonzairon* 存在論) and epistemology (*ninshikiron* 認識論). Epistemology is besieged by ontology and ontology is entangled with epistemology.

Thus, as Kan (12) claims, the contemporary *shintairon* has to be the circuit that restores the unity among perception, thought and existence by means of the body.

Abbreviations

- HNJ* = Doi T. 土井忠生; Morita T. 森田武; Chōnan M. 長南実 (eds) (1980). *Hōyaku Nippo jisho* 邦訳日葡辞書 (A Japanese Translation of the Japanese-Portuguese Dictionary). Tōkyō: Iwanami shoten.
- KKJ* = Tōgō Y. 東郷吉男 (ed.) (2003). *Karada kotoba jiten* からだことば辞典 (Dictionary of Body-Words). Tōkyō: Tōkyōdō shuppan.
- KKSJ* = Yamaguchi Y. 山口佳紀 (ed.) (2008). *Kurashi no kotoba: Shingogen jiten* 暮らしのことば 新語源辞典 (The Words of Life: New Dictionary of Etymology). Tōkyō: Kōdansha.
- KRS* = Ōno S. 大野晋; Hamanishi M. 浜西正人 (eds) (1981). *Kadokawa ruigo shin-jiten* 角川類語新辞典 (Kadokawa new dictionary of synonyms). Tōkyō: Kadokawa shoten.
- NKDJ* = Nihon kokugo daijiten dainihan henshūinkai 日本国語大辞典第二版編集委員会; Shōgakukan kokugo jiten henshūbu 小学館国語辞典編集部 (eds) (2001). *Nihon kokugo daijiten* 日本国語大辞典 (Great Dictionary of Japanese National Language), vol. 12. Tōkyō: Shōgakukan.
- RD* = Shibata T. 柴田武; Yamada S. 山田進 (eds) (2002). *Ruigo daijiten* 類語大辞典 (The Great Dictionary of Synonyms). Tōkyō: Kōdansha.

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