NARRATIVES, *LAMAI* AND FEMALE LABOUR:

(RE)NARRATING THE UNTOLD STORY OF HRM IN SRI LANKA'S

APPAREL INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

Narratives, *Lamai* and Female Labour:
(re)narrating the untold story of HRM in Sri Lanka's apparel industry

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This thesis explores the formation of female shopfloor workers' collective identity in the Global South. It raises the question of why female shopfloor workers in Sri Lanka's apparel industry are called *lamai* (little ones) and what role HRM plays in this process – of (un)doing the workers' collective identity as *lamai*. It *re*visits the identity construction process by locating it beyond the organizational actors' work-identity narratives. By (re)conceptualizing HRM as a 'web of texts' it problematizes the rhetoric–reality dualism in HRM and so dissects the role of the language(s) of HRM in the formation of work identities. For this the thesis embarks on a reading journey, informed by poststructuralist discourse analysis, and *re*narrates (un)doing the *lamai* identity as in different texts which it generates in multiple research settings in Sri Lanka's apparel industry. During this journey it shows how (un)doing the *lamai* identity becomes a 'collective burden' of actors in both wider society as well as the industry itself. It argues that the *lamai* identity is a 'double-bind' phenomenon which amalgamates the workers' gender and their class in order to form a third 'object' – i.e., *childrenized* female labour – out of fusion with the signifier *lamai*. So it elucidates how the same signifier *lamai* marks the workers' resistance to doing their identity as *lamai* while at the same time doing the identity itself. In conclusion, the thesis argues that doing female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* creates an ethical paradox within which adult workers become *lamai*. It nonetheless shows how this childrenization process is legitimized by the language(s) of HRM. Therefore, it concludes that the language(s) of HRM is not rhetoric but an inextricable part of the reality of HRM.

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Abbreviations and Glossary

Frequently used acronyms

AMHR	Assistant Human Resource Manager
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
FM	Factory Manager
FTZ	Free Trade Zone
GM	General Manager
HRM	Human Resource Management
JCC	Joint Consultative Committee
MHR	Human Resource Manager
OM	Operations Manager
PA	Production Assistant
PDA	Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis
UNP	United National Party

Frequently used Sinhala terms

Daruwo	children; daughters; sons
Duppath	poor
Duwa	daughter
Gama	village; rural
Ganu lamai	young women; girls
Gode	rustic; rural

Juki lamai	*Juki* girls
Kalape	zone
Kamkaru sthreen	women workers; women labourers
Kandayam samajikayo	team members
Keli	pieces
Kello	girls
Lamai	children; little ones
Lamaya	child; little one
Mahana lamai	sewing girls
Malli	younger brother
Nangi	younger sister
Nisadas	free verse
Operatorwariyan	female operators
Pirimi lamai	young men; boys
Putha	son
Tharuniyan	young women
Vesa kalape	zone of whores

Introduction

Welcome to the Journey of *Re*narrating (Doing) *Lamai*

Introduction

Does the way in which labour is managed – Human Resource Management (HRM) – tend to construct employee identities in work organizations? If so, what is the role of HRM, its language(s) or texts, in narrating, doing, restoring and undoing female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai*[1] in the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry? As the literature suggests, many researchers explore, dissect and problematize the formation and construction of employee identities in work organizations, in many different ways (see for example Collinson 1992; Ely 1995; Brewis et al. 1997; Alvesson 1998; Wicks 2002; Rees and Garnsey 2003; Hall et al. 2007; Jeanes 2007; Bagger et al. 2008; Clarke et al. 2009; Ybema et al. 2009). However, most of this research is based on Euro-American work organizations, despite the growing importance of the Global South, particularly of its female labour, at this moment of global capitalism (Esteva and Prakash 1998; Mohanty 2003; Perera 2008). So the formation and construction of employee identities in non-western work organization milieus and indeed in work organizations in the Global South still remain largely under-researched. Further research on the formation and construction of employee identities is mostly based on work-identity narratives articulated by the actors in

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[1] In Sri Lanka's apparel industry female shopfloor workers are customarily called and referred to as *lamai* or *garment lamai* in Sinhala – an Indo-Aryan language used by the majority of Sri Lankans who are known as Sinhalese (see Disanayaka 1998). The term *lamai* (*lamaya* in its singular form) denotes many different meanings: children; little ones; mature age children and so forth (*Gunasena Great Sinhala Dictionary* 2005: 2108). So rather than 'translating' the term as 'children' or 'little ones' throughout this thesis I use the term in its original form, as *lamai* (and *lamaya*). However, unlike the English term 'children' the signifier *lamaya*/*lamai* appears in many forms such as *lamayage* (child's) *lamayek* (a child), *lamayo* (child or oh child) etc. In these circumstances to make this thesis 'readable', as Barthes (1974) suggests, I 'translate' the term in relation to the con-text in which the term appears.

work organizations (see for example Collinson 1988; 1992; Ely 1995; Alvesson 1998; Humphreys and Brown 2002; Hall et al. 2007; Clarke et al. 2009). As a result much of this work hardly takes into consideration what role other social actors in the wider society, particularly in the surrounding environs of the organizations, play in the process of articulating identities in work organizations.

On the other hand, there is a noticeable absence of literature that articulates the formation and construction of *female shopfloor workers*' identities in work organizations in general and non-western work organization milieus in particular. This absence is especially vivid as far as research findings on the role of HRM in the formation of employee identities are concerned. When it comes to the language(s) of HRM in relation to the formation of employee identities, particularly of female shopfloor workers in the Global South, academic literature is non-existent, although many researchers emphasise the role of language in constructing gender and work identities (Weedon 1987; Butler 1990; Norton 1997; Hughes 2002; Rees and Garnsey 2003; Brickell 2006; Ybema et al. 2009).

Acknowledging these lacunae in academic literature, in this thesis I invite the reader to a journey of *re*narrating (un)doing female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* in the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry. In this journey I especially focus on what role HRM, mainly its language(s) or texts, plays in this process of (doing) the *lamai* identity and how different actors in the apparel industry and wider Sri Lankan society gather together, intermingle and entwine with each other to do, narrate, restore and to undo the female shopfloor workers' collective identity in the industry.

Context and Background – of (Un)Doing *Lamai*

Soon after its political independence in 1948,[2] Sri Lanka's economy shifted towards protectionist import substitution policies induced primarily by growing balance of payments problems. As such since the mid 1950s, the economy of the independent Sri Lanka was under the direct control of the government (Gunasinghe 1996; Athukorala and Jayasuriya 2000). However, in the late 1970s, the rightist United National Party (UNP) government liberalized the country's economy. This liberal economic policy led to many socio-economic changes. Alongside these radical changes, the resultant economic hardship in the nascent liberal economy – and before that – compelled 'traditionally unemployed' women, mostly young rural women, to be breadwinners for their families (Jayaweera and Sanmugam 1999; Jayaweera 2000; 2002; de Silva 2002; Hewamanne 2008).

As an inextricable part of this liberal economic policy, the first Free Trade Zone (FTZ) of Sri Lanka was created in 1978 in Katunayake – the Katunayake FTZ.[3] This was done under the auspices of the World Bank and the IMF as a condition for so-called foreign aid and, as the prime socio-economic space for foreign speculators and their local partners (Jayaweera and Sanmugam 1999; Aggarwal 2005; Perera 2008). In this 'investment-favourable' nascent liberalized economic context, the export-oriented apparel industry of the country (re)emerged as the major player in the zone.[4] Subsequently it became the major manufacturing industry and export income generator in Sri Lanka's economy (Kelegama

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[2] 4th February 1948 marks the end of the colonial rule of the Portuguese, Dutch and finally British during the period from the 16th century to the 20th century.
[3] The Katunayake FTZ was established in June 1978 under the Greater Colombo Economic Commission Act No. 4 of 1978. It is situated 29 Kilometres from Colombo, in close proximity to Sri Lanka's only international airport, the Bandaranaike International Airport.
[4] The history of Sri Lanka's export-oriented apparel industry dates back to the mid 1900s. However, until economic liberalization its role in Sri Lanka's economy was insignificant.

and Foley 1999; Kelegama and Epaarachchi 2002; Kelegama 2005). It contributes more than 40 percent to Sri Lanka's export income and provides a livelihood for nearly 1.2 million people (Kelegama 2005; *Central Bank of Sri Lanka Annual Report* 2008).

But, despite its significant economic impact, the industry in this nascent liberalized context emerged as a somewhat unorthodox industry in the manufacturing sector in Sri Lanka (see Devanarayana 1997; Lynch 2007; Hewamanne 2003; 2008). This was mainly due to the manner in which the industry changed if not revolutionized the gender constituent of the manufacturing sector of the country, although other factors such as favourable laws for investors, tax breaks etc., which were part of a 'benefits package' for the investors in the FTZ, were not insignificant. The industry absorbed the majority of the traditionally unemployed young women – who were compelled to become breadwinners or to change their socio-family role from 'un(re)productive labour' to 'productive labour' (Gough 1972) – as the main apparatus in its labour-intensive factory floor, chiefly as shopfloor workers (Jayaweera and Sanmugam 1999; de Silva 2002; Jayaweera 2002; Hewamanne 2008; Perera 2008). As statistics exhibit more than 80 percent of the industry's workforce comprises of young women, mostly from rural areas of the country. The majority of them are unmarried and in the age group 15 to 25, who have had school education of ten to twelve years (Jayaweera and Sanmugam 1999; Jayaweera 2000; Pyle 2001; de Silva 2002).

This unorthodox nature of the industry was sharpened by the emerging socio-cultural trends in the FTZ and indeed in the industry in this nascent liberalized economic context. Despite the heavy influx of migrant young women neither the industry nor the UNP government made any considerable effort to safeguard the welfare and well-being of these women

workers (Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; Attanapola 2005). As a result, these migrant young women as shopfloor workers in the industry were (and are) subject to many problematic forces and processes in the factory milieu as well as in wider social milieus, particularly the (surrounding) environs of the zone which I call the *kalape*.[5]

In the factory milieu they were required to work like machines to cope with 'scientifically derived' and virtually unattainable production targets of the labour-intensive factory floor. Further in the absence of trade unions and employee 'friendly' polices and practices of managing labour a 'monarchic-type' wage-labour relationship emerged in the industry as a means of managing (female) shopfloor labour (Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; Samanmali 2007). This relationship not only hindered the development of any collective bargaining initiatives by the workers but also often tended to buttress the virtual wage-labour slavery in the industry. So, for example, when unable to achieve the targets or if disobeying the 'norms' of the factory floor the workers were inhumanely punished and unlawfully dismissed (Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; Samanmali 2007; *Makena Mathaka* 2007).

Moreover, the workers' lives in the wider society, particularly in the *kalape* context, were no different, perhaps even worse than in the factory milieu. In this period (and even presently) the workers suffered from inadequate and unsuitable lodgings, lack of medical and transport facilities etc. They had to live mostly in small wooden houses provided by

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[5] The term *kalape* means 'zone' and indeed the FTZ. But for people in the Katunayake vicinity *kalape* does not mean only the FTZ within its artificial geographical boundary. Rather it is a much broader socio-geographical domain which also signifies the surrounding areas of the zone where the workers lodge, shop and the like as well as the zone itself. As this term problematizes the artificial boundary between the zone and its environs I use this term throughout the thesis whenever I need to highlight the blurring between the 'inside' and 'outside' of the Katunayake FTZ.

private landlords in the *kalape*. These insecure and overcrowded but relatively expensive lodgings were also hampered by inadequate water and sanitary facilities (*Sunday Island* 1991; Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; Attanapola 2005; *Makena Mathaka* 2007). In addition the workers were exploited by many different actors, mainly the shop owners/keepers[6] whose 'target market' were these migrant factory workers, in the *kalape*, for example by price-fixing. Likewise on their way between work and lodgings the workers were often subject to verbal abuse. Sexual harassment and assaults were not uncommon. Some of the workers were robbed, raped, even murdered on their way home, mostly after their nightshifts (Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; Attanapola 2005; *Makena Mathaka* 2007).

In this unsympathetic socio-organizational milieu, despite the feminization of this localized global factory floor, the new wage labour role of these migrant young women as shopfloor workers in the apparel industry did not lead them to be recognized as equal members of the (traditional) 'working class' of Sri Lanka (see Lynch 2002; Hewamanne 2003; 2008). Paradoxically enough these female shopfloor workers have been called *lamai* since their seemingly unwelcome arrival in the industry. This utterance, this signification and indeed this *doing* of female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* – which emerged at the very moment the workers (dis)appeared in the industry and so at the very moment the feminization process began – is extremely persistent. It is very much alive in the present day industry, even after the monarchic-type wage labour relations were supplemented by the 'trendy' HRM in the 1990s. Therefore, it is embodied and embedded in a variety of

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[6] These consist of owners/keepers of small shops (*kada*), which supply daily needs, jewellery shops, tailoring shops and even fortune tellers and the like.

different oral as well as written texts – not only newspaper reportage, poems, films, songs, everyday utterances etc. but also ironically texts of HRM such as job advertisements, training manuals and the like in the industry – which are woven and interwoven by many different social actors in the industry as well as in wider Sri Lankan society. And indeed it (dis)appears as a rather 'innocent', general(ized) utterance in the work and wider social milieus equally, despite the workers' 'glorified' status and role as 'the most valuable asset' in the industry – as HRM articulates it – and as the 'foreign income generators' in wider Sri Lankan society.

Research Questions

In this context the thesis sets out to answer the research question:

- Why female shopfloor workers in Sri Lanka's apparel industry are called *lamai* – despite their wage labour role as proletarian women in the Global South?

This central issue leaves rooms for supplementary practical and theoretical enquiries about the formation and construction of female shopfloor workers' collective identity in the industry. Therefore, as part and parcel of this central research question, the thesis articulates and answers the following supplementary questions:

- How different actors in the industry and wider Sri Lankan society gather together, intermingle and entwine with each other vis-à-vis the formation and construction of the workers' collective identity as *lamai* since their arrival in the industry?
- Is the workers' *lamai* identity in the industry is a mere extension of their *ganu lamai* (girls, young women) identity in wider Sri Lankan society? If so, why do they –

their collective identity – remain *lamai* in the work milieu, even when they have become wage labourers?

- Why is HRM, its texts, in the industry are eager to utter the term *lamai* to refer to and represent its glorified 'human resources' – i.e., female shopfloor workers – and indeed to do and restore their *lamai* identity, despite its colloquialism? Does this inform us of the 'agenda of gender' of HRM in the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry?

- Simultaneously, does this enthusiasm of HRM – to do the *lamai* identity – imply how this Euro-American phenomenon has emerged in this localized global apparel industry in Sri Lanka as a palatable supplement to personnel management with a view to managing (female) shopfloor workers in the industry? And, consequently, does it imply a peculiar nature of, or a way in which HRM has emerged or appeared in this subaltern socio-economic context?

- Does HRM (re)construct its 'own identity' in the process of managing (female) labour and indeed of the formation and construction of female shopfloor workers' identity in the industry? If so what does the phenomenon of HRM look like when it appears in this non-western work milieu?

These research questions mirror the objectives of this thesis.

Objectives

The prime objective of this thesis is to explore and dissect the formation and construction of female shopfloor workers' collective identity in the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry and what role HRM, mainly its language(s) – oral and written texts of HRM – plays in this process.

In fulfilling this major objective, the thesis also explores, dissects and problematizes:

- the ways in which different social actors in the apparel industry and wider Sri Lankan society gather together, intermingle and entwine to do, narrate, restore and to undo the female shopfloor workers' collective identity in the industry;

- how the oral and written texts of HRM intermingle and entwine with each other as well as with other social texts in the industry and wider society that are embodied and embedded in social discourses of women, managing (female) labour etc. with a view to managing female shopfloor labour in the industry;

- the nature and disposition of HRM in Sri Lanka's apparel industry; and

- how this same signifier/identity *lamai* substitutes for (and is substituted by) other relational/residual signifiers/identities (*viz. kello* - girls, *Juki lamai, Juki kello - Juki girls,*[7] machine operators, team members and so forth) as it oscillates from one context to another in the process of (un)doing the workers' collective identity as *lamai* and so as part and parcel of (un)doing HRM in the industry.

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[7] These degrading nicknames are also used to refer to and represent the workers, mainly in the wider society and the *kalape* (Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; Lynch 207; Hewamanne 2008). They also imply the lineage of the workers' role in the industry as they were 'plugged into' electronic sewing machines called 'Juki' (a popular Japanese brand), particularly in its nascent liberalized economic context.

Methodology

This study is a 'qualitative' research, in its broader sense. It invites the reader into a *re*narrating journey of (un)doing the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers in Sri Lanka's apparel industry. So it encourages the reader to (dis)engage with multiple social actors in the industry and wider Sri Lankan society and to listen to stories told and retold by these actors about themselves and others in the industry during this journey. Indeed it offers 'supplementary-critical' readings, informed by Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis (PDA), of a variety of different texts that are embodied and embedded in (doing) the workers' collective identity as *lamai* as woven and interwoven by these actors.

These oral and written texts – primary and secondary data – have been gathered and generated in four phases in multiple research sites in Sri Lanka's apparel industry, mainly in two apparel manufacturing companies which I call ChillCo and HotCo,[8] during April-September 2007. Semi-structured and unstructured interviews and observation were employed as prime methods of gathering and generating data. In this process many different social actors in the industry (*viz.* managers, supervisors, shopfloor workers, owners of boarding houses where workers lodge etc.) emerged as the key participants of these interview sessions – who (re)narrate stories about themselves and others as part and parcel of (un)doing the *lamai* identity and of (un)doing HRM in the industry. And different socio-spatial arrangements such as the factory floor, the cafeteria and the like at ChillCo and HotCo became the main locations of my observation sessions.

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[8] ChillCo and HotCo are members of a well-established group of companies in Sri Lanka. All the names of companies and their members mentioned in this thesis are pseudonyms since I need to protect their identity and privacy.

This renarrating journey is arranged through three interconnected phases – three chapters of data analysis – with a view to making this journey palatable for the reader. The first chapter articulates a 'genealogical note' of the discursive formation of the *lamai* identity. The second engages in (un/doing) the *lamai* identity at ChillCo and HotCo. The third explores and problematizes the role of social actors in the *kalape* vis-à-vis doing, narrating and undoing female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai*. The thesis crafts and employs, as I have said, (a version of) PDA – not as opposed to other approaches of discourse and/or text analysis but with a critique of them – as the most appropriate or palatable analytical means to *re*narrate (doing) the *lamai* identity. Here it views the text in its poststructuralist sense – not as something that suspends reference "…to history, to the world, to reality, to being, and especially not to the other…" but as *referent* (Derrida 1988a: 137) and as "… a polysemic space where the paths of several possible meanings intersect…" (Barthes 1981: 37). Simultaneously it treats the reader who reads or faces the text (Ahmed 2002) as a producer who (re)produces the reality, meaning, truth of the text by arguing that 'to read' is a labour of language and so reading is (or as) a 'metonymic labour' of the reader (Barthes 1974; also Derrida 1997).

As far as choosing PDA over other analytical possibilities is concerned I argue that PDA insists on the importance of and so performs the role of 'con-textualization' of (doing) the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers in Sri Lanka's apparel industry. Further it facilitates us to engage not only with the search for a plenitude of meaning, but, more importantly, with a search for a scarcity of meaning, with what cannot be said, with what is impossible or unreasonable within certain discursive locations – ChillCo, HotCo and my other research settings (Hook 2001: 527; also Foucault 1972). So PDA avoids the risk of

reducing *re*narration of (doing) the *lamai* identity to the 'markings of (its) textuality' (Hook 2001). Indeed it not only provides us with a palatable means to understand how the identity of female shopfloor workers (as *lamai*) is constantly produced and reproduced, positioned and repositioned through discourses (Butler 1988; 1990; Walkerdine 1989; Baxter 2002). It also allows us to understand the ways in which the signifier/identity *lamai* substitutes for (and is substituted by) the relational/residual signifiers/identities such as *kello* (girls), machine operators, team members etc. as it oscillates from one con-text to another.

Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 1 articulates the literature review of the thesis. So it discuses the emergence of the phenomenon of HRM in the West and dissects the notion of HRM and its concepts. It critically reviews what HRM offers for women at work and the role of language(s) of HRM in work organizations. The chapter also dissects the notion of identity and the formation of (gender) identities in the work milieu. It examines and articulates the role of HRM, particularly of its language(s), in the formation of gender/employee identities in the work organizations. Also by reflecting upon the culturally specific and historically embedded nature of articulating women's identities in Sri Lanka it critically examines how far the notion of the Self in the West mirrors the notion of 'collective selves' of the non-western Other.

Chapter 2 discerns what the phenomenon of HRM looks like when it appears in Sri Lanka's apparel industry. So the chapter attempts to 'conceptualize' the nature and disposition of HRM in the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry with a view to dissecting its role as far as managing if not *childrenizing* female labour in the industry is concerned. It

shows how HRM has created its own rupture at the very moment it appeared in the apparel industry. It dissects and articulates how this rupture led to a split in managing labour in the industry into two distinct sets of managerial apparatuses which I call 'doing' and 'undoing' HRM. The chapter also explains the ways in which these two sets of managerial apparatuses intermingle and entwine with each other in the process of (un)doing HRM in the industry. It argues that HRM in the industry can therefore be captured or conceptualized as a 'web of texts'.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology – empirical and analytical – of the thesis. It explains the rationale of choosing multiple research sites in Sri Lanka's apparel industry. It describes and justifies the nature of data, data gathering and generating techniques along with the constraints of the fieldwork. The chapter also discusses how I analyze data. Here it explains the rationale of selecting the poststructuralist approach to discourse analysis (PDA) as my prime analytical method and articulates its nature, tools and techniques. It draws a descriptive picture of reading of a variety of different texts that are embodied and embedded in (un)doing the *lamai* identity, bracketing the heterogeneous nature of these texts for a moment. In so doing the chapter discusses phases of this *re*narrating journey in order to provide a coherent bridge to the three chapters of data analysis which will follow.

Chapter 4, the first of these data analysis, articulates a 'genealogical note' of the discursive formation of the *lamai* identity in Sri Lanka's apparel industry. It reads and so offers supplementary-critical reading of different texts (*viz.* job advertisements, newspaper reportage, cinematic texts etc.) that are embodied and embedded in (doing) the *lamai* identity. So the chapter dissects how the *lamai* identity 'emerged' in the industry in the late

1970s as part and parcel of the use of the Japanese sewing machine *Juki*. It also examines and marks the beginning of the process of (apparent) 'evaporation' of *Juki,* mainly in official-written texts of (doing) HRM in the industry, as the signifier/signification of the workers' estranged labour and so of their collective identity in the industry since the mid 1980s. Further the chapter examines and problematizes this 'evaporation' and consequently exemplifies its (deferred) presence in the present-day industry. Simultaneously it shows the fragmented, heterogeneous nature of (doing) the *lamai* identity, its becoming, and how this nature of (doing) the *lamai* identity creates an 'indissoluble' ethical paradox within which adult, able women factory workers become *lamai*.

Chapter 5 articulates a *re*narration of (un)doing *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers at ChillCo and HotCo. So it is, on the one hand, an extension of my attempt at *re*narrating (un)doing the *lamai* identity by the different social actors in the industry and wider Sri Lankan society as articulated in chapter 4. It is, on the other hand, a means of exploring and dissecting what role HRM plays vis-à-vis (un)doing the *lamai* identity in ChillCo and HotCo. So the chapter shows the ways in which different actors in these two work milieus gather together, intermingle and entwine with each other to do, narrate, restore and undo female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai*. Simultaneously it dissects and problematizes how (un)doing HRM and so multiple oral and written texts of HRM intermingle and entwine to normalize and legitimatize (doing) the workers' collective identity as *lamai* at ChillCo and HotCo and so in the wider industry. Indeed it exposes the rupture and so the unique or peculiar nature and disposition of HRM in the industry which appears as a series of events or 'web of texts' which is woven, interwoven and negotiated by many different actors in HotCo and ChillCo in particular and wider industry in general.

Chapter 6 explores the role of social actors in the (surrounding) environs of the industry and indeed in the *kalape* vis-à-vis doing, narrating and undoing female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai*. So it reads a variety of different oral and written texts which are woven and interwoven by these actors. Consequently it also brings back the voices of the 'factory women' – their 'subversive' aesthetic practices such as *nisadas* (free verse) – which largely remain unrealized or unheard in the factory milieu. Further the chapter shows how the '*un*doing' attempts of the *lamai* identity also tend to do and to restore the workers' collective identity as *lamai* in the industry. Indeed it exposes the aporia[9] of *un*doing the *lamai* identity in the industry.

Synthesis and Conclusion articulates and discusses the overall conclusions arrived at in the thesis. It also critically reflects on the renarration journey as a whole and its different phases in particular. Further it discusses constraints and limitations of the thesis. Finally it outlines suggestions for further research.

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[9] "[The Greek term]… *aporia* indicates the state of impasse, nonpassage, or logical contradiction that can never be permanently resolved, a state of constant dilemma with no general or final solution" (Wang 2005: 45; original emphasis).

Literature Review
HRM, Gender and (Un)Doing Identities

Introduction

What is the role of HRM in the process of the formation and construction of work identities in general and gender identities in particular? If (the language of) HRM plays a significant role in the formation and construction of identities in work organizations (Legge 1999b; Coates 2004), in this process might HRM rupture and, consequently, (re)construct its own identity, as articulated mainly in normative models of HRM? [10] In fact does this intermingling of gender, (un)doing identities, and (the language of) HRM with each other compel us to revisit and hence surpass the prevailing limits of existing commentaries on HRM, even in the critical scholarly tradition, as Steyaert and Janessens (1999) and a few others (e.g. Watson 1995a; Legge 2005) have already identified?

In addressing these theoretico-empirical issues and in accordance with the prime ethico-political objectives of this thesis, in this chapter I articulate my literature review. In the existing literature on HRM, in the broad sense, these areas and issues remain marginalized even in the critical scholarly tradition. Having identified these lacunae, in this chapter I attempt to synthesise a link – which emerges as an unavoidable prerequisite of *re*narrating (doing) the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers in Sri Lanka's apparel industry – between HRM and the formation of employee identities, particularly of female workers.

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[10] The term 'normative model' (or statement) denotes models and conceptual frameworks of HRM that present aspirations of what HRM ideally should be (Legge 2005: 69).

Indeed here I employ and review critical researchers'[11] contribution to HRM literature generally and what I would call feminist critics of HRM particularly. However, to synthesise this link, I argue, we need to know where does this 'controversial signifier', HRM, (Storey 1991) come from?; what is its nature and identity?; what does it 'really' do in work organizations?; what role does it play in the formation of employee identities?; what is and what can be meant by identity in general and gender identity in particular?; and so on and so forth.

Thus to make the review palatable this chapter is divided into two parts. In part one, it first articulates the 'shift' of employment management from personnel management to HRM. Inspired by Steyaert and Janssens' (1999) approach to analyse trends and developments, particularly in the critical scholarly tradition in HRM, second it dissects 'concepts *in* HRM' and, consequently, the 'concept *of* HRM'[12] to explore the nature and identity of HRM. Here the chapter engages with critical researchers' reviews, critiques and commentaries on the phenomenon of HRM. In so doing, third, the chapter focuses on feminist critique and the language(s) of HRM with a view to exploring and understanding the 'agenda of gender' of HRM and the role of its language(s) in work organizations.

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[11] The terms 'critical researcher' and 'critical studies' are used here in their broad sense. So they imply 'dialogic studies' (postmodern, deconstructionist), 'critical studies' (late modern, reformist) and so on, but not 'critical studies' according to Deetz's typologies (Deetz 1996; Keegan and Boselie 2006) or from Steyaert's and Janessens' (1999) point of view which divides critical HRM literature into the Foucauldian perspective and the critical perspective.

[12] In their influential essay titled 'Human and Inhuman Resource Management: Saving the Subject of HRM' Steyaert and Janssens highlight and dissect the concept *of* HRM and concepts *in* HRM. As they put it "We would like to do this by bringing in 'moving concepts' specific for the field of HRM which might overturn what is considered to be 'the field' of HRM" (1999: 182). In this review of HRM literature, I adopt this approach, more or less, to dissect what appears as the concept *of* and concepts *in* HRM in literature. Taking this path, however, does not deny the blurry nature of the phenomenon. Rather it is employed as a means to cope with the complex and elusive nature of the phenomenon of HRM itself.

Then in part two the chapter moves to the identity/the subject. Having discussed the plurivocal nature of the notion of identity, here the chapter, first critically reviews the tension between the notions of 'sex' and 'gender' as a starting point to understand the formation of gender identities at work. In so doing, second it problematizes the essentialist understanding of subjectivity/the self and subsequently the binary opposites of masculinity–femininity. Here the chapter shows the shifting and fragmented nature of identity/the subject. Consequently, inspired by poststructuralist notions, the chapter argues that gender identity is not something that a person is or has, but what that person does during and/or through discursive practices. By so arguing, third, the chapter critically reviews literature on the formation of gender identities at work. Here it focuses on the role of (the language of) HRM in the formation of female shopfloor workers' identities in work organizations. As the chapter recognizes, there is, however, a noticeable absence of literature on the role of HRM in relation to the formation of female shopfloor workers' identities as well as women's identities at work more generally.

Having established this noticeable absence and the intersection of gender identity at work with class, race, culture etc., the chapter argues that if we need to *undo* and *renarrate* gender identity at work – indeed the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers in Sri Lanka's apparel industry – the identity should be located in the discursive context within which it is done, constructed and narrated. Therefore, finally the chapter moves to the notion of collective selves/identities in non-western societies. Here it reflects upon literature that shows the historically embedded and culturally specific nature of women's identity in Sri Lanka. In its concluding remarks, the chapter argues that now the absence in the relevant academic literature is two fold. On the one hand, there is lack of literature

which articulates gender issues in HRM, the formation of female shopfloor workers' identities, and the role of HRM in the formation of women's identities at work. On the other hand, there is a profound gap between empirical findings in the West and particularly western notions of the subject/identity and the multiple realities in non-western societies – indeed the multiple realities of female shopfloor workers in Sri Lanka's apparel industry and the heterogeneous nature of their identities which (dis)appear under the collective signature of *lamai*.

Part One
HRM, Gender, Language

From Personnel Management to HRM

As history suggests there is no coherent and linear development of what we experience as contemporary employment management in work organizations under the banner of HRM. The notion of HRM emerged in different geographical zones in different time horizons due to many different socio-economic and socio-political circumstances (Miles 1965; Guest 1987; 1990; Hendry and Pettigrew 1990; Keenoy and Anthony 1992; Lundy 1994; Sparrow and Budhwar 1997; Langbert and Friedman 2002; Legge 2005). Nonetheless it is of course important to note that the prevailing notions of managing labour or employment management – its concepts, tools, techniques etc. – are inevitable outcomes of the rise of the capitalist mode of production and, consequently, the factory system in the West in particular (Jacoby 1985; Torrington 1991; Marsden 1997; Legge 2005).

In the nascent industrial context in the West there were, however, no identifiable organizational policies on managing labour (Engels 1975; Langbert and Friedman 2002). Most of the decisions in relation to 'handling labour matters' in work organizations were taken by line management as each supervisor or *foreman* was empowered to hire and manage his own workforce (Miles and Snow 1984; Jacoby 1985; Kochan and Cappelli 1999). In fact even in the early part of the twentieth century managing labour was largely if not solely governed by the rubric of labour legislation (Langbert and Friedman 2002), despite some of the initiatives taken by social reformers during the mid-nineteenth century, particularly in the UK and the United States, to improve factory work conditions (Miles and Snow 1984; Torrington 1991; Legge 2005).

The emergence of the personnel function

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly in the First World War period in the United States, the foremen's arbitrary exercise of power over workers was under the scrutiny of the trade unions. During this period the notion of scientific management was also creeping into the factory system, and the social reformers were putting their pressure on owners for labour reforms (Miles and Snow 1984; Jacoby 1985). At this point, alongside these socio-economic and socio-political trends, labour market shortages and the effort of expansion of production during the First World War led to the emergence of the personnel department or the personnel-industrial relations function in the factory system in the United States and indeed in capitalist work organizations in the West more generally (Jacoby 1985; Kochan and Cappelli 1999; Langbert and Friedman 2002; Legge 2005).

During this period the personnel department made deep inroads into the foremen's territory and their traditional duties of handling labour matters in the factory (Jacoby 1985: 148). This created conflicts between the foreman/line management and the new personnel department. The conflicts were, however, not due to a battle for territory as such. Rather line management tended to embrace a traditional if not conservative model of workforce management, whereas the approach taken by the personnel department was more 'caring' and 'liberal' due to the context in which it emerged and seeming need for more 'humane' ways to manage. As a result during its nascent stage the personnel function was concerned more about the welfare of workers rather than how to enforce control apparatuses. Thus:

> The history of personnel management reflects a tension between two potentially incompatible orientations, which might be called the 'personnel' and the 'management' approaches to the function … or the 'caring' versus 'control' approaches. (Legge 2005: 52; also see Jacoby 1985; Torrington 1991)

Nonetheless, despite its 'benevolent' and 'feminine' temperament, during this period the main role of the personnel function was indeed to deal with centralised staffing matters such as recruitment, hiring, selection and placement, assessment, and promotion which were once performed by foremen. As it evolved the function was also required to undertake new roles such as occupational health and safety, and pension management. Subsequently it was further developed to deal with government regulations, *manpower* planning, training and development, and performance management (Jacoby 1985; Kochan and Cappelli 1999; Legge 2005).

But as history suggests the development of the function and its role in work organizations in the West was not linear and gradual. Time and again not only did the nature of the function change but even its existence became endangered. This nonlinear and inconsistent development of the function was not by chance. Rather the changes were always shaped and aligned by the socio-economic and socio-political circumstances in different historical contexts in the West. The historical evolution of the function therefore manifests its continuous struggle to survive and to maintain its status, credibility and longevity in work organizations (Jacoby 1985; Guest 1990; Torrington 1991; Legge 2005). Nevertheless the role of the function in work organizations was often challenged by many interest groups, mainly academics (e.g. Miles 1965; Drucker 1968) in different socio-economic contexts, which finally led to apparent demise of personnel management − at least on a symbolic plane − as part and parcel of the late 1970s and early 1980s socio-economic reality in the West.

The emergence of HRM

From the early 1970s onwards there was a diminishing trend of trade unionism in the West, particularly in the United States and the UK in the Reagan and Thatcher years. During this period domestic as well as global market competition in the West was also intensified mainly by growing Japanese economic strength. On the other hand, corporate entities in the West experienced slow growth in productivity (Walton 1985; Guest 1987; 1990; Hendry and Pettigrew 1990; Legge 1991; 2005; Langbert and Friedman 2002).

In this context the old models of managing productivity, change, and labour seemed increasingly inappropriate to cope with the emerging socio-economic reality (Walton 1985;

Guest 1990). As a result new discourses of management and managing labour such as quality of work life (QWL), employee involvement (EI), organization development (OD), and the like emerged in organizational as well as academic spheres (Walton 1985; Guest 1990; Hendry and Pettigrew 1990). These discourses were often characterized by 'ideal' corporate world examples and case studies. During this period companies in the United States also experimented with a radically different workforce strategy at the plant level (Walton 1985). This new strategy – the 'commitment-oriented strategy' – which was coined as an alternative to the traditional or 'control-oriented strategy' (of personnel management) to workforce management tended to create radical changes in managing employment. On the other hand, it offered a means to achieve 'investment' in human and technical capacity. As a result this 'new' approach to employment management was compatible with the wider organizational strategies that were crafted to cope with the emerging socio-economic reality in this period. In this context socio-economic trends and developments in the 1980s in the West, more specifically in North America, marked the 'shift' of managing labour from personnel management to HRM (Miles and Snow 1984; Walton 1985; Guest 1990; Hendry and Pettigrew 1990; Keenoy 1990; Legge 1991; 2005; Lundy 1994). This new fashion of workforce management – HRM – subsequently began to intrude into non-western socio-economic spheres in different time periods, but mainly during the 1980s (Guest 1990; Legge 1991; 2005; Sparrow and Budhwar 1997).

But, despite its growing popularity in the corporate world – which was endorsed and sponsored particularly by Anglo-American market managerialism – this so-called shift and hence the phenomenon of HRM itself has been treated suspiciously by some researchers in the field of employment management since its emergence in the West. By radically

deviating from the orthodoxy of managing labour these dissenting researchers problematize not only the glamorized versions of this 'new' fashion of managing labour – as silver bullet and universal panacea. They also often question what HRM offers as an 'alternative' to personnel management and in fact what distinguishes HRM from personnel management (see for example Legge 1991; 1999a; 2005; Torrington 1991; Keenoy 1999; Watson 2004). Indeed the dissentient researchers whom I simply call critical researchers in HRM problematize not only concepts *in* HRM – its models, tools, techniques etc. – but also the concept *of* HRM itself. Nevertheless their critiques and commentary on the phenomenon of HRM remain outside of the 'mainstream' of academic literature on HRM (Keegan and Boselie 2006).

Critical Researchers and HRM

In their analysis of HRM articles published in nine mainstream HRM and general management journals,[13] Keegan and Boselie (2006) notify us that critical perspectives on HRM are a largely ignored aspect of the field. Despite this lack of what Keegan and Boselie (2006) call 'dissensus inspired analysis' of HRM I would argue that critical researchers do play an influential role in the field of employment management. Inspired by many different philosophical traditions they dissect and problematize the phenomenon of HRM and its 'hidden agendas' since its emergence in the West. They approach HRM not as an 'entity' which is good, unique, fixed or fixable but as a 'critical object' for those who

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[13] This analysis is based on articles published in *Human Resource Management*, *Human Resource Planning*, *Human Resource Management Journal*, *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Organization*, and *Work, Employment and Society* in the period 1995 to 2000.

produce and reproduce it in wider socio-organisational contexts. Thus inevitably critical researchers' account of the phenomenon is multiple. It comprises and is influenced by many theoretico-analytical stances which contradict as well as entwine with each other. Nevertheless critical researchers as a whole are especially eager to dissect and problematize, more or less, the normative ideals of HRM and their 'hidden agendas' in work organizations (see for example Legge 1991; 1995; 1999a; 2001; 2005).

Despite the diversity in the critical scholarly tradition in HRM, some specific trends, for example Foucauldian-inspired research, are noticeable (e.g. Townley 1993a; 1993b; 1995; 1998; Newton 1994; Findlay and Newton 1998; Barratt 2002; 2003). However, the majority of researchers in this tradition do not adhere to specific philosophical trajectories. In this review I therefore engage (and disengage) with critical researchers' accounts as a whole, disregarding their theoretico-analytical differences and bracketing some classifications that have been used to position these accounts under different compartments (see for example Steyaert and Janessens 1999; Keegan and Boselie 2006). However, adhering to the prime ethico-political objectives of the thesis I focus mainly on what I call the 'feminist critique' of HRM and critical researchers' understanding of the language(s) of HRM and its role in work organizations. To read and (dis)engage in these areas, deeply, coherently and in a palatable manner, I argue, we need to know what is or what can be meant by the (moving) concept of HRM along with its concepts. I therefore begin this review with concepts *in* and the concept *of* HRM as articulated primarily in the critical scholarly tradition.

Concepts *in* HRM

As history suggests the phenomenon of HRM, at the very moment it emerged in the West, took refuge in or energy from already established literature, mainly on strategy and strategic management. This dependency of HRM on strategic management literature is either highlighted by many researchers or their texts embody the ways in which HRM entwines with corporate strategy and strategic management. Hendry and Pettigrew (1990: 21), for example, point out that the early key texts of HRM such as *Strategic Human Resource Management* – edited by Charles Fomburn and colleagues in 1984 – located themselves much more centrally in the strategic management literature. Many other researchers in this period – Miles and Snow (1984) for example – also attempted to articulate the strategic integration of HRM – a trend which has been noticeable since the emergence of HRM in the West (see Guest 1987; 1990; Hendry and Pettigrew 1990; 1992; Keenoy 1990; Poole 1990; Lundy 1994; Storey 1995; Sisson and Storey 2000; Legge 2005).

The rationale behind the dominance of the strategic integration of HRM, I argue, is primarily due to 1980s' socio-economic reality in the West. As a result HRM, as we have already recognized, emerged as a palatable means to cope mainly with market changes and Japanese competition (Guest 1990; Hendry and Pettigrew 1990; Legge 1991; 2005). From corporations' point of view what HRM was supposed to provide as an 'alternative' to personnel management was thus not 'new' apparatuses of managing employment *per se*. Rather it was primarily a package of corporate strategies that could be deployed to cope with market reality in the 1980s (e.g. Miles and Snow 1984; Walton 1985). This strategic integration in fact not only tended to determine the 'original' temperament of the

phenomenon. It was also highlighted as the key feature that distinguishes HRM from personnel management (Guest 1987; Keenoy 1990; Torrington 1991; Legge 2005). Indeed as Storey articulates:

> Human resource management is a distinctive approach to employment management which *seeks to achieve competitive advantage through the strategic deployment of a highly committed and capable workforce,* using an integrated array of cultural, structural and personnel techniques. (1995: 5; emphasis mine)

But, despite the discursive dominance of the strategic integration of HRM, history suggests the polarization of HRM between strategic management literature and human relations tradition. Therefore, it suggests that the roots of HRM are embedded in two distinct perspectives: utilitarian instrumentalism/situational contingency and developmental humanism. The former that proposed ways to maximise employees' contribution to the organization located itself in strategic management literature. The latter, on the contrary, adheres to the human relations tradition. The early key texts of HRM thus embodied the tension of locating HRM either in 'situational contingency' or in 'developmental-humanist' perspectives. This tension subsequently led to two distinct versions or models of HRM which are popularly known as 'hard' and 'soft' models (Guest 1987; Hendry and Pettigrew 1990; Keenoy 1990; 1999; Lundy 1994; Legge 1995; 2005; Truss et al. 1997).

The hard-soft distinction in HRM

The hard model which is inspired by the situational contingency perspective is associated with the Michigan school conception of HRM. So it is located centrally in strategic management literature and adheres to strategic fit. As such the model is based on the

notions of tight strategic control and an economic model of man according to McGregor's Theory X. It stresses the importance of integrating human resources policies, systems and activities with business strategy. And thus it lays emphasis on the quantitative, calculative and business strategic aspects of managing labour (Keenoy 1990; 1999; Hendry and Pettigrew 1990; Truss et al. 1997; Legge 2005).

The soft model which is inspired primarily by the 'developmental-humanist' standpoint, on the other hand, is associated with the Harvard school conception of HRM. It sees and treats employees as valued assets, a source of competitive advantage through their commitment, adaptability and high quality while still emphasizing the importance of integrating HR policies with business objectives. Thus the model assumes that the performance of employees depends primarily on their commitment rather than on (strategic) control (Keenoy 1990; 1999; Truss et al. 1997; Legge 2005). Due to this (apparently) antagonistic nature these hard and soft models mirror the tension between what Hendry and Pettigrew (1990) call 'human *resource management*' versus '*human resource* management'. Indeed they mirror whether the emphasis of HRM is placed on the *resource* or on the *human* (Truss et al. 1997).

By deviating from orthodoxies about these models critical researchers in HRM, however, not only problematize their (apparently) antagonistic nature but also dissect how it affects the nature of the phenomenon. They argue that assigning a dualistic status – hard versus soft – to HRM not only oversimplifies the complex nature of the phenomenon. It also effaces the differences in the positions of the Michigan school and of the Harvard school's conceptions of HRM. Indeed they caution us that "The hard-soft distinction not only

confuses variations in intellectual or academic emphasis with variations in management practice, it tends to ignore the political-economic context of managerial practices" (Watson 2004: 455; also see Keenoy 1990; 1999).

At this point some researchers exemplify how most normative statements of HRM comprise elements of both hard and soft models. They also illustrate the ways in which these models intermingle and entwine with each other in forming the complex nature of HRM (Keenoy 1999; Legge 2005). Indeed as Legge puts it:

> While the language and policies of the 'hard' version model can be used on employees peripheral to the organisation, those of the 'soft' version can be used to reassure and secure 'core' employees whose resourcefulness is deemed essential for the achievement of competitive advantage. (2005: 126)

Thus critical researchers argue that in everyday work contexts it is difficult to identify HR practices that can be narrowed down either to the hard model or to the soft model as such although literature suggests otherwise (Truss et al. 1997). Nevertheless they explain how the hard model – strategic control/integration – dominates and suppresses the so-called soft 'developmental-humanist' approach to workforce management. For example, Truss et al. (1997), based on their empirical findings, exemplify the central role played by strategic control and indeed the hard model in the everyday organizational context. As they point out "… the rhetoric adopted by the companies frequently embraces the tenets of the soft, commitment model, while the reality experienced by employees is more concerned with strategic control, similar to the hard model" (1997: 53). Elsewhere it is suggested that, even though the soft model adheres to the human relations tradition, these notions are portrayed and utilised not for their own sake but to emphasise the hard strategic goals of the firm –

how best to use human *resources*. It is also argued that 'soft' models are a subtle way of exploiting labour in capitalist work organizations because within 'hard' models the exploitation is quite noticeable (Legge 1995; 2001; 2005). Indeed although the hard–soft distinction of HRM is highlighted in the literature, according to critical researchers, it is not only ambiguous but also tends to 'conceal' the key role played by strategic control/integration in the work milieu by suppressing the humane aspects of the 'soft' image of the phenomenon.

Key goals of HRM

As part and parcel of unpicking this hard–soft dualism critical researchers are also eager to dissect and problematize the so-called key goals of HRM – *viz.*, high commitment, high quality, flexibility and strategic integration of HRM as recommended, for example, by Guest (1987; 1990). They show how these goals such as commitment and flexibility which are embodied in the soft image of HRM are concentrated around the strategic integration itself – the hard image of HRM – by creating a preeminent role for strategic control (Keenoy 1990; Storey 1995). Many critical researchers thus claim the peculiar nature and hidden agendas of these key goals. They argue that these goals are cultural constructs and hence connote multiple meanings which surpass their denotations in normative statements about HRM (Legge 1995; 2005; Woodall 1996; Keenoy 1997; 1999; Dickens 1998; Healy 1999). For example, Legge (2005) suggests that the key goal 'commitment' or 'organizational commitment' denotes not only behavioural commitment but also attitudinal commitment. As she suggests behavioural commitment – which largely goes with behavioural compliance – is, however, more often highlighted at the expense of attitudinal commitment. Attitudinal commitment, according to Legge (2005: 216), is exchanged for

valued organizational rewards whereas behavioural commitment involves a calculation of the costs of leaving rather than staying with the organization. Healy (1999) also identifies a multiplicity of meanings associated with commitment – such as work commitment, material commitment, organizational commitment etc. – rather than 'commitment' emphasized in the normative models. She shows how the meanings embedded in this social construct change over time. Indeed Healy argues that considering commitment from a single focus may distort our understanding of the construct.

The key goal flexibility is also under the scrutiny of many critical researchers. By critically analysing the commodification of labour, Legge (1999b: 251), for example, posits an interesting relationship – which is based on Purcell and Purcell – between 'E', (labour) exploitation and 'F', (the notion of) flexibility in capitalist work organizations. Thus critical researchers argue that in everyday organizational contexts these language constructs are the 'rhetoric' of HRM – for example, the so-called positive relationship between good human resource practices and commitment/performance (Keenoy 1990; 1999; Legge 1995; 2005). So not only the hard–soft models but also what appear as the key goals of HRM – as part and parcel of these models themselves – are neither coherent concepts nor 'neutral' apparatuses of managing labour. Rather they are riddled with internal contradiction and embody or embedded in many 'hidden' agendas in work organizations.

In this context suffice it to say that the concepts *in* HRM – through which the concept *of* HRM has been synthesised – are not as coherent and consistent as assumed, mainly in Anglo-American market managerialism. Rather they are antagonistic on the symbolic plane and also ambiguous in theory as well as in practice. These antagonisms and ambiguities, I

argue, are part of and embodied in the peculiar nature of HRM itself. Thus the concept *of* HRM is not an internally coherent and universalistic form of people management (Keenoy 1990: 372). Rather it is a 'controversial signifier' that signifies the moving concept of HRM – indeed its 'becoming' (Storey 1991; Keenoy 1999; Steyaert and Janssens 1999). In fact I argue that to understand the phenomenon of HRM – its role in the formation and construction of female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* in Sri Lanka's apparel industry – we should be able to understand the nature of this 'moving concept' as articulated in critical HRM tradition. This is because this tradition, as we have already recognized, attempts to surpass and problematize the normative ideals of HRM along with its market managerialist window-dressing.

The concept *of* HRM

What HRM 'really' means for both the practitioner and the academic is still a blur. It denotes multiple meanings for those who adhere to different theoretico-analytical perspectives and indeed those who produce and reproduce HRM in different socio-economic contexts. As such it has been described as a 'theory' (Guest 1987); a 'route map' (Noon 1992); a management 'philosophy' (Noon 1992); a 'cultural construct' (Keenoy and Anthony 1992); a 'meta-narrative' (Keenoy and Anthony 1992); a 'symbolic label' (Storey 1995); a 'model' (Legge 1999a); a 'discourse' (Harley and Hardy 2004; Legge 2005), or even 'a set of practices' (Janssens and Steyaert 2009). Despite this intrinsic ambiguity of the identity of HRM, as Keenoy (1999) has already notified us, many critical researchers provide us with different classificatory accounts to dissect and understand its nature and identity.

Classificatory accounts of HRM

By comparing and contrasting US and UK researchers' definitions of the phenomenon, Legge (2005), for example, offers a precise classificatory account to dissect some attempts at articulating the nature and identity of HRM. She categorises these attempts under four classificatory models: the normative, descriptive-functional, descriptive-behavioural and critical-evaluative models of HRM. According to Legge (2005: 105) the majority of the normative definitions comprise common themes such as strategic integration of human resource policies to reinforce an appropriate organizational culture; the importance of human resources, particularly as a source of competitive advantage; employees' commitment and flexibility and the like. She also points out that there is, however, a noticeable gap between these normative models and company practice which is also highlighted by many other researchers (e.g. Keenoy 1990; Woodall 1996; Truss et al. 1997). The descriptive-functional model, according to Legge, adheres to a pluralistic approach – which sees organizations and their environment as arenas of conflicts between different interest individuals and groups (Burrell and Morgan 1979: 202; see also Morgan 1997).

But by referring to descriptive-functional definitions of HRM, particularly Torrington and Hall's, Legge notifies us of the way in which human resources are portrayed as a passive object in this model. As far as the descriptive-behavioural model is concerned Legge suggests that the model embodies, not what HRM ideally should be – as portrayed by normative definitions – but on the contrary its practice in everyday organizational context. Under the critical-evaluative models she (2005:122-124) classifies commentaries, views, interpretations etc. of those who approach HRM as a critical object. As Legge (2005: 337)

argues all these models, except a few critical commentaries made about HRM from a postmodern perspective, adhere to the modernist perspective of positivism – with its realist ontology and hypothetico-deductive epistemology.

Like Legge other researchers also attempt to classify HRM literature under different themes or from different perspectives. Steyaert and Janssens (1999), for example, classify HRM literature if not practices into a theoretical, a practice, a critical, and also a Foucauldian perspective. Under these respective perspectives they review the contributions of scholars "…who are oriented toward designing theoretically-based HRM tools; those who examine HRM as a field of practice, and those who reflect in a critical way on the concept of HRM and its implementation in practice" (1999: 182). Under the Foucauldian perspective they also attempt to review the contribution of scholars who are inspired by this sort of scholarship. Keegan and Boselie (2006), on the other hand, suggest that 'dissensus inspired analysis' of HRM that implies both 'dialogic' or 'critical' studies in HRM (see also footnote 11).

HRM as a moving concept

As these classificatory accounts suggest what we confront as HRM in literature as well as in the everyday organizational context is not something fixed or fixable, or something that has a singular identity. Rather it denotes many different meanings and embodies multiple identities. Thus many critical researchers have attempted to explain this elusive nature of the identity of HRM. Noon (1992), for example, questions whether HRM is a map, model or theory. He (1992: 16) highlights the lack of clarity as to what HRM means for both practitioners and academics. Adhering to a postmodernist perspective, Keenoy and

Anthony (1992) illustrate the way in which HRM appears as a cultural construct as well as a meta-narrative rather than a management discipline that has a singular identity. They argue that "A precise, coherent and internally consistent definition [of HRM] would be dysfunctional: [because] HRM does not start with a set of policy objectives but with a [corporate] mission statement" (1992: 238). Similarly Keenoy (1990) also recognizes what he calls the 'brilliant ambiguity' of the term HRM as one of the remarkable features of the phenomenon. As he points out this ambiguity is integral to the historical project of HRM. In his later essay Keenoy (1997: 831) therefore argues that HRM is not fixed but a fluid phenomenon which is conceptually elusive and empirically ambiguous. Indeed he suggests that "[HRM] appears to be compromised of multiple, shifting, competing and, more often than not, contingent 'identities'" (1999: 5).

Owing to this intrinsic ambiguity of the identity of HRM, Keenoy (1999: 3-9) articulates four 'sources' – *viz.* conceptual-theoretical elision; empirical elusiveness; representation or the language problems; and institutional locations – that he says tend to the becoming of the phenomenon. First he (1999: 3) points out that confusion about the conceptual-theoretical identity of HRM has been evident since the emergence of the phenomenon. Indeed Keenoy argues that "…this *continuous* process of conceptual-theoretic elision is necessary to sustain the modernist construction of HRM" (1999: 4; original emphasis). So he further adds that, without this elision, it would be impossible to manage the tension and ambiguity between hard and soft models of HRM. Second, by considering empirical findings about HRM, Keenoy also claims that there is a lack of empirical evidence to prove the existence of either hard or soft images of HRM as such, although literature may suggest otherwise.

Further he (1999: 6) argues that the empirical evidence on HRM hardly indicates the fact that it has overcome the potential conflicts embedded in the employment relationship.

Keenoy identifies the language of HRM as the third source of its persistent ambiguity. By considering the buzzwords/concepts in HRM, for example, commitment, flexibility, empowerment etc., he argues that "Some of these terms are all the more troublesome because, although they are used to describe particular practices or arrangements, conceptually, they denote rhetorical managerial aspirations … and desired states of being…" (1999: 6-7). As he further argues the lack of fixed words or linguistic categories in HRM is a major source of the elusive nature of the phenomenon. In fact Keenoy reminds us of the way in which these linguistic categories if not language(s) of HRM tend to portray and hence keep the phenomenon as an elusive sociolinguistic construct rather than a strict or fixed linguistic one.

Fourth, by critically reflecting upon the emerging patterns of the employment relationship as well as development of 'new' organizational forms, Keenoy articulates the changing character of institutional locations – the emergence of the small business sector, outsourcing, subcontracting etc. – as the final source of the ambiguity of HRM. So he posits that the way in which these changes of the institutional locations in which HRM is put into practice tend to reproduce the persistent ambiguity of the phenomenon. In this context, by critically dissecting definitional/ontological problems as well as the elusive nature of the identity of HRM, Keenoy (1997; 1999) coins the term 'HRMism' instead of using the term HRM. As he puts it "'HRMism' is used as a generic term to signify all the various meanings and practices which have come to be subsumed within 'HRM'" (1999:

19). By metaphorizing 'HRM as hologram' Keenoy thus further argues that "…
conceptually, HRMism appears to be a moving target, and … empirically, it has no fixed
(or fixable) forms" (1999: 15). Therefore for critical researchers and particularly for
Keenoy HRM is not a coherent unified subject but a heterogeneous phenomenon or
phenomena – a moving concept – riddled with many internal contradictions and
definitional/ontological problems – which appears under a collective signature, 'HRM'.
Indeed as Keenoy puts it:

> … it seems most accurate to regard HRM not as a concrete, coherent entity but
> as a series of mutually implicated phenomena which is/are in the *process of
> becoming.* (1999: 16; original emphasis)

Like Keenoy other critical scholars have identified internal contradictions and traits that
rupture the foundation and credibility of HRM (e.g. Steyaert and Janssens 1999; Legge
2005; Janssens and Steyaert 2009). Steyaert and Janssens (1999: 181), for example,
recognize three elements if not what they call 'mildly suicidal' traits in HRM that reduce its
foundation and credibility as a unified or definable object. They name these traits as the
normative character of the models and techniques of HRM; the lack of ethical or
philosophical research in HRM; and the lack of self-reflective character. Thus, although
some would attempt to portray HRM as an internally coherent and universalistic form of
people management, these researchers claim the term HRM itself has been a 'controversial
signifier' since its appearance. Indeed as Storey (1991: 4) suggests "… the concept [of
HRM] has come to represent one of the most controversial signifiers in managerial debate
in the 1980s". Therefore any attempt at understanding and defining HRM as an internally
coherent managerial discipline which has a singular identity appears as a somewhat
pointless project. Its identity, as we have already recognized, was blurred by already

established disciplines such as strategic management, psychology etc. in which HRM had to refuge in or take energy from at the very moment it emerged in the West.

Thus to sum up what appears as the concept of HRM and indeed the phenomenon of HRM itself is neither fixed nor even a fixable construct. Nor has it been a unified or definable object since its emergence in capitalist work organizations in the West. Rather, as we have already recognized, 'the facticity' of HRM (if there is such thing) – the projected, perceived, experienced or allegedly 'factual' character of the phenomenon (Keenoy 1997: 839) – was ruptured by HRM itself at the very moment it emerged. So the concept of HRM is a 'moving concept' (Steyaert and Janssens 1999) – the becoming of the phenomenon, as Keenoy (1999) has notified us. Indeed to explore, understand and dissect not only the nature of HRM but also what it does in work organizations many critical researchers argue that we need to locate the phenomenon in the wider socio-political context within which it is produced and reproduced (Keenoy 1999; Steyaert and Janssens 1999; Watson 2004; Legge 2005; Janssens and Steyaert 2009). Taking this route, I argue, therefore allows us to understand what HRM 'really' does for and to women in work organizations, particularly as far as managing female labour and the formation and construction of employee identities at work are concerned.

Gender and HRM

As we have seen the personnel function emerged with a 'feminine-caring' temperament as it attempted to establish or improve employees' welfare over the arbitrary exercise of power by line management. As a result, the original temperament of the function in which women performed a significant role not only as welfare officers but also as personnel

managers, particularly in the UK context, was relatively 'benevolent' (Jacoby 1985; Legge 2005). Thus the role of the function has even been regarded as the social work or nursing of industry, dealing with human casualties of work organizations (Marsden 1997: 109). As part and parcel of its historical evolution this early 'benevolent-feminine' nature of the function was, however, later diminished if not abandoned altogether (Torrington 1991; Legge 2005). As the palatable supplement to the foreman's role the function learned to operate within the bureaucracy, serving organizational objectives rather than paternalistic objectives of the employer (Torrington 1991: 58). On the other hand, due to the mounting pressure of male-led and dominated trade unions the function gradually became a male domain from the First World War onwards and particularly during the Second World War in the UK (Legge 2005).

The emergence of HRM in the 1980s as an 'alternative' to personnel management, however, tended to terminate this gendering process, at least on the symbolic plane. By establishing a 'new' language of managing labour – strategic integration, commitment, flexibility etc. – over the traditional welfare-bureaucratic-control aspects of personnel management it offered a promise of a (supposedly) gender neutral discipline – macho management dressed up as benevolent paternalism, as Legge (1995) prefers to call it. This 'gender neutral' temperament of HRM and its new language, for example flexibility, consequently begun to imply 'positive' initiatives for female employees in the context of the feminization of workforce in the 1980s in the West more generally (Steele 1992; Dickens 1998; Legge 2005).

Despite this apparently gender-neutral temperament and the so-called women-friendly HRM policies and practices – which attempt to establish harmony between the dualistic role of women as wage employees and mothers/wives (Chiu and Ng 1999; Moore et al. 2001; Poelmans et al. 2003) – the everyday reality of women in work organizations is somewhat different. They are still and persistently over-represented in lower grades and under-represented in higher grades (Itzin, 1995; Gardiner and Tiggemann 1999; Truss 1999; Lane 2000). Indeed they are subject to sex-based job segregation and other overt and covert discriminations such as lower wages, the glass ceiling and so forth (Curran 1988; Itzin 1995; Jackson 2001; Dreher 2003; Goodman et al. 2003; Arfken et al. 2004; Bihagen and Ohls 2006).

Thus many critical researchers are eager to know and dissect what HRM does and what this 'gender neutral' language really offers for women in the work milieu, notwithstanding the differences between their theoretico-analytical stances (e.g. Townley 1998; Legge 2005). But within this project in the critical scholarly tradition, there are a few researchers whose prime ethico-political objective is to unveil the 'agenda of gender' of HRM. These researchers, whom I call feminist critics of HRM, in fact would argue that HRM is a part if not guarantor of this everyday reality of women in work organizations (Steele 1992; Woodall 1996; Dickens 1998; Healy 1999; Coates 2004). So they are keen to unveil this concealed 'agenda of gender', primarily in relation to the so-called soft image of HRM as well as other managerial apparatuses such as recruitment and selection, appraisals etc. offered by HRM.

At this point Woodall (1996: 329) points out that woman's experiences in work organizations remain a largely ignored aspect in the debate about HRM. Instead most of the writing on women's experience of employment is mainly focused on broad themes of employee relations rather than on HRM and its role in work organizations. Despite this lacuna, feminist critics discuss the ways in which women are still recruited, selected and appraised against male characteristics, and rewarded according to male norms at work. They show how women's voices are being subordinated in work organizations through the apparently gender-neutral policies and processes of HRM (Steele 1992; Woodall 1996; Dickens 1998; Maddock 1999; Healy 1999; Truss 1999; Lane 2000; Coates 2004). Indeed as far as recruitment and selection is concerned it has been argued that informally facilitated gender discrimination allows male selectors to adopt word-of-mouth recruitment, which is likely to exclude women applicants (Collinson et al. 1990). Lane (2000) similarly recognizes the way in which the assumed lower commitment of women leads to their disadvantage in recruitment and selection decisions. Gender prejudices in recruitment and selection decisions overall, as some researchers suggest, thus tend to create negative impacts on female applicants (Morgan and Knights 1991).

Indeed Woodall (1996) claims even so-called scientifically based and rigorous HRM instruments in selection and assessment are not neutral, but often contaminated by gender prejudice. Likewise Coates (2004: 569) suggests that performance appraisal, although appearing as gender-neutral, in reality it is not, because many measurable processes are certainly based on male-specific behaviours. She argues that in these contexts women are also compelled to adapt to these masculine measurements, although they are not essential to

job performance. Dickens (1998) also claims a male bias in seemingly gender-neutral processes such as selection, appraisal and reward. Indeed as Maddock recounts to us:

> While gurus (Peter, Handy and Drucker) may think that a paradigm shift of feminisation in managing is crucial to organizational transformation; in reality it would appear that in Britain managers continue to confirm traditional practices and reinforce male behavioural responses. Unfortunately, women's preference for relational processes and organizational development is rarely valued or formally acknowledged within recruitment, appraisal and performance measurement.
> [Thus]…women managers were selected and appraised against male characteristics… Men and women continue to be rewarded for being decisive, competitive and playing-by-the-rules. (1999: 43)

In this context, following their arguments of the processes such as recruitment and selection, performance appraisal etc., feminist critics argue that, despite their apparently gender neutral-depoliticised temperament, other concepts such as commitment likewise gendered concepts and thus deploy a concealed 'agenda of gender'. So Dickens, for example, argues that "… a gendered model of commitment may come into play, with women *qua* women being assumed to be less committed than men…" (1998: 25). As she further argues, commitment is in fact a gendered model that establishes the male as the benchmark for the committed worker which leads to the subordination of women through different processes of HRM such as selection, appraisals and the like. Similarly some researchers, as we have already recognized, not only claim a multiplicity of meanings embodied in the notion of commitment. They also argue that these meanings are frequently gendered (Healy 1999). It is also suggested the way in which commitment is deployed against married women and mothers, as they are often assumed to be less committed workers due to their domestic responsibilities (Lane 2000: 707). Indeed, as Woodall argues, "…as HRM is silent and

inactive over the persistence of biased stereotypes of women's commitment to work and career, its claim to a 'soft' human-relations focus rings hollow" (1996: 345).

Like commitment other key goals of HRM, particularly flexibility, are under the close scrutiny of some feminist critics. Dickens (1998: 27), for example, argues that, although the notion of flexibility (supposedly) offers positive initiatives for women, practice is somewhat different. Indeed she suggests that developments in flexibility utilise and underpin existing gender segregation rather than challenge it. Similarly Woodall (1996) argues that, despite the rhetoric of flexibility employer 'deployment' of flexibility has little to offer women as it is not seen from their point of view. As far as the notion of equality is concerned other researchers also attempt to explore what HRM offers for ethnic minority women in work organizations. As they claim, despite its promise of equality, HRM tends to marginalize ethnic minority women in work organizations (Kamenou and Fearfull 2006). In this context Dickens argues that due to this apparently gender-neutral-depoliticised nature or blindness of HRM:

> ...women are invisible and men are not identified as men; employees are viewed as disembodied, without gender, often with the assumption – usually implicit – that the experience of men (the implicit model for the universal worker) is generic to both men and women. (1998: 34-35)

Thus suffice it to say that since its emergence, HRM can be regarded as a gendered terrain as it deploys a concealed 'agenda of gender' through its multiple managerial apparatuses. Thus as Woodall has already reminded us "...it [is] doubtful whether HRM will find a cure for its own gender-blindness" (1996: 350).

Despite these attempts at exploring and understanding what HRM does (to) and offers for women in the work milieu, its agenda of gender still remains a largely ignored aspect of debate in HRM, even in the critical scholarly tradition. On the other hand, as we have already seen, there is a noticeable tendency among feminist critics – who are keen to unveil this agenda as a whole – also to narrow down what HRM offers and what women confront in work organizations under the banner of HRM to the so-called rhetoric–reality dualism of HRM (e.g. Woodall 1996; Dickens 1998; Truss 1999). This dualism thus appears as an influential theoretical spectrum not only in the critical scholarly tradition in HRM generally but among feminist critics of HRM more specifically, disregarding some criticism of it (see Keenoy 1999; Janssens and Steyaert 2009). But at this point it is important to explore and understand what this so-called rhetoric does in the work milieu. Indeed if the (apparent) tension between rhetoric and reality, as I argue, is the margin or sphere that determines the nature of contemporary lives of women in work organizations what is the role of rhetoric (of HRM) – as far as managing female labour under the banner of HRM is concerned? Is it the antagonistic other of so-called reality of HRM or part of it, if not 'a thing' that constructs reality itself?

Rhetoric, Reality and Language(s) in HRM

As we have seen critical researchers in general and feminist critics in particular argue that there is a noticeable gap between what HRM offers and what it really does in work organizations. They often highlight this gap through what they call the rhetoric and reality of HRM (Keenoy 1990; 1997; Legge 1995; 2005; Woodall 1996; Truss et al. 1997; Dickens 1998; Truss 1999). This dichotomy, as Janessens and Steyaert (2009: 149) recently claim, has been used since the early work on HRM in both mainstream (e.g. Guest 1987)

and critical writings. For example, Sisson (cited in Legge 2005: 342) articulates popular notions such as customer first, flexibility, empowerment, training and development and the like as the rhetoric of HRM. On the contrary, the reality, as he suggests, is market forces first; management 'can do' what it wants; making someone else take the risk and responsibility; manipulation etc. as opposed to these (rhetorical) notions. Similarly Legge (1995; 2005), as we have already seen, also often emphasizes the rhetoric and reality distinction. In fact she questions "… does the reality of HRM lie as much in the rhetoric and hype as in its practice?" (1995: 34). Likewise Dickens argues that "… the gender equality assumption in the [soft] HRM model is part of the rhetoric rather than the reality" (1998: 23).

Thus in the critical scholarly tradition in HRM, on the one hand, the rhetoric of HRM is articulated as the antagonistic other of the 'thing' called 'reality' which is apparently embedded in 'real' practices of managing labour. On the other hand, within this rhetoric–reality dualism, linguistic categories or the language of HRM is equated to rhetoric and vice versa. In these critical commentaries then the rhetoric and so language of HRM is also highlighted not only as the 'thing' that distinguishes HRM from personnel management but also as part of the persistent ambiguity of the phenomenon. By citing Flower, Legge (1995), for example, suggests that the real difference between HRM and personnel management is the language of HRM. Other researchers claim the language of HRM as part of the phenomenon's profound ambiguity (Keenoy and Anthony 1992; Keenoy 1997; 1999). Indeed as Keenoy argues:

HRM appears as a combination of illusion and allusion because *we have no words with which to control its identity*. Alternatively, *we have no linguistic categories which are sufficiently 'robust to fix' HRM…* (1999: 7; emphasis mine)

Thus the language or language representation of HRM, these researchers claim, is a central problem of HRM and hence part of its persistent ambiguity. Also they suggest that the reality of HRM appears as the 'real facts' of managing labour in work organizations that (dis)appears under the deceiving layers of its rhetoric – the language of HRM. Indeed they point out that "… if one takes the language [of HRM] at face value, much of the rhetoric associated with HRM is, quite literally, other-worldly" (Keenoy 1990: 374). During this extensive emphasis on the rhetoric–reality gap these researchers not only suggest that the language of HRM is central to the representational crisis of the realities of HRM (Keenoy 1997: 835). They also illustrate how the language of HRM tends to conceal hidden agendas of HRM. Legge (2001; 2005), for example argues that linguistic categories and certainly the language(s) of HRM conceal the exploitation of labour in capitalist work organizations. Similarly Keenoy and Anthony (1992) claim the commodification of labour through the language of HRM. Keenoy (1990) develops a similar argument. For him the rhetoric of HRM is a means of legitimizing the commodification of labour in practice, even though here he highlights the rhetoric–reality distinction.

However, this popular rhetoric–reality distinction is suspiciously treated by some researchers in the critical scholarly tradition in HRM. In one of his later essays Keenoy (1999) himself recognizes the limitations of this modernist dualism to explore and understand the nature of HRM. Indeed as Janessens and Steyaert claim "Studying HR

practices as social practices, one would no longer distinguish between rhetorical utterances, as merely representational, and practices, as objective realities" (2009: 149-150). At this point by radically departing from this dualism some researchers emphasise the vital role of the rhetoric and indeed language of HRM in the *construction* of meaning and reality. They argue that there is no non-rhetorical way of using language (Watson 1995a: 8). Indeed they articulate rhetoric, not as something which is antagonistic to or separate from reality, but as a means of the (re)construction of social reality or part of reality itself. So they argue that rhetorical processes are not only relevant to the way in which we communicate, they also come into the way we think (Watson 1995b: 806). In this context by adopting Parkin, Kamoche, for example, describes rhetoric as:

> … a form of word-delivery, a type of ritual which says something about the speaker, the spoken-to, and the situation, and which goes beyond what is contained in the surface message. (1995: 368)

In this light these researchers reject the attempts that distinguish the rhetoric of HRM from its so-called reality. By highlighting the rhetoric–reality dualism in HRM, Watson (1995b), for example, articulates the way in which the rhetoric and reality entwine with each other in the context of employee redundancy. He exemplifies the way in which metonymy[14] in language, for example 'brown envelope', in the context of redundancy appears as part of or constructs social reality in the work milieu. As he puts it:

> When joking occurred about redundancy it typically utilized the 'brown envelope' term. One example of this is a comment made to me when I went away from the factory for a few days to attend an academic conference. 'I'll send you a postcard', I joked to one of my managerial colleagues, not imagining that there would actually be postcards available at the University of

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[14] Metonymy is a figure of language in which meaning is communicated by association (Berger 1995: 87).

Keele. 'Oh thanks', came the response, 'Just don't send it in a brown envelope, I don't want to risk a heart attack'. (1995b: 813)

So this rhetorical utterance – the metonymy of brown envelope – as we see is not a mere utterance. Rather it is part of the everyday reality of this work milieu and hence constructs the reality of HRM itself – i.e., redundancy, its pain and horror as confronted by wage labourers in capitalist work organizations.

Kamoche (1995) also states the manner in which organizational actors construct and reconstruct meanings of HRM through ritualistic behaviour, and by using rhetoric and/or language. So by deviating from the assumption that 'objective' reality (exists), he argues that "…the reality of HRM is seen to exist in the first instance in the minds of organizational actors, who subsequently *objectify* their subjective experience through language and ritual" (1995: 369; original emphasis). As Kamoche further points out the language of HRM creates the meaning of HRM and, consequently, constructs the social reality of organizational actors. Indeed he cautions:

> To dismiss HRM as "sheer rhetoric" is to misconstrue the essence and meaning
> of language in everyday life, and to ignore the ideational and political purposes
> of those who engage in the verbal arts to create and propagate social
> phenomena. (1995: 383; original emphasis)

Even the authors who adhere to the rhetoric–reality dualism develop somewhat similar arguments. As far as business transactions – negotiation between the major stakeholders of HRM (*viz.* academics, line managers and HR/personnel mangers) vis-à-vis a management consultancy assignment, for example – are concerned Legge (1995: 48) argues that "In such transactions the rhetoric of HRM is the reality of commerce". She (1995: 55) further

argues that the rhetoric of HRM is consistent with the demand of enterprise culture, because it serves the purposes of these stakeholders of HRM who seek legitimacy in a hostile business climate. By further extending this argument to the notions of objective and phenomenological reality, Legge elsewhere suggests that "The importance of HRM lies not in the objective reality of its normative models and their implementation, but in the phenomenological reality of its rhetoric ..." (2005: 123). Indeed as Watson reminds us:

> The reality of HRM is part of the rhetoric of HRM and the rhetoric of HRM is part of its reality. Those in search of HRM must be prepared to study words as well as to study practices. They are the two sides of the same coin. (1995a: 15)

Thus suffice it to say that the rhetoric and indeed the language(s) of HRM is part of the construction of social reality in everyday organizational life. Nevertheless its role in work organizations either remains largely marginalized in the relevant literature or is narrowed down to a derivative role such as a source of the representational crisis of HRM (e.g. Keenoy 1997; 1999).

Summary

History suggests how HRM emerged as a palatable supplement for managing labour in capitalist work organizations as part and parcel of 1980s' socio-economic reality in the West. However, as we have seen, critical researchers in HRM suggest neither concepts *in* HRM nor the concept *of* HRM are fixed and singular but rather are in process – moving concept/s. In this context feminist critics of HRM argue that what HRM 'really' offers to women in work organizations is actually an inextricable part of its 'agenda of gender'. They, as many other critical researchers, do narrow down this agenda to the so-called rhetoric and reality of HRM. But, despite this hype of rhetoric versus reality, some

researchers argue that the rhetoric or language(s) of HRM is not something antagonistic to its reality but part of it, although this position remains mostly unnoticed, even in critical scholarly tradition of HRM. So if the rhetoric/language of HRM constructs social reality in work organizations, does it play a role in the formation and construction of gender identity and indeed the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers in Sri Lanka's apparel industry? If so, what *is* or *can be* meant by gender identity at work? I now move to part two of this literature review to discuss these issues in more detail.

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Part Two

Identity, Collective Selves and HRM

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The Notion of Identity

The notion of identity is plurivocal. It overlaps with the terms/notions self, subject and subjectivity. In academic literature as well as in everyday usage they are often uttered simultaneously or as synonymously. One supplements the other/s and vice versa. The notions themselves, on the other hand, have been articulated in many different ways by different philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists etc. Weedon (1987), for example, articulates the shifting and plurivocal nature of the notion of gender subjectivity in psychoanalysis from Freud to Lacan to (psychoanalytical) feminists such as Irigaray and Kristeva. Atkins (2005a) has also developed a detailed account of self and/or subjectivity in western philosophy which elaborates the ways in which these notions have been articulated in different ways in modernity.

Despite this shifting and plurivocal picture some writers view identity as a somewhat fixed and coherent construct. So they claim that identity mirrors the essential qualities which a person possesses or is (see for a review, Atkins 2005b). Many scholars, however, reject this essentialist stance and argue that the self/identity is not something that a person is or has, but performance (Butler 1988; 1990; 2004; Walkerdine 1989). Some also claim the idiosyncratic nature of western notions of identity/subject. They argue that these do not mirror the self/identity in non-western societies, which is primarily 'collective' (Nakamura 1964; Kondo 1990a; 1990b; Pang 2006). Nevertheless they accept the 'dominancy' of the western concept of the self which is primarily 'individual', particularly in literature on the self/identity (Kondo 1990b).

This ongoing debate on the 'subject of subjectivity' is especially noticeable in feminist understandings of subjectivity and indeed gender subjectivity. De Beauvoir (1972), for example, articulates identity – woman's identity – as the Other of the man. But Irigaray claims the impossibility of the existence of women's subjectivity in what she calls 'phallocentrism',[15] because "…any theory of the subject has always been appropriated by the "masculine"" (2005: 271). Meantime Butler articulates the self/identity as a linguistic occasion. As she puts it:

> The genealogy of the subject as a critical category, however, suggests that the subject, rather than be identified strictly with the individual, ought to be designated as a linguistic category, a placeholder, a structure in formation… The subject is a linguistic occasion for the individual to achieve and reproduce intelligibility, the linguistic condition of its existence and agency. (1997: 10-11)

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[15] A kind of semantic economy that turns on the principle value of the masculine – the 'phallus' (Atkins 2005d: 267).

Thus the self/identity appears not as a coherent entity, but as a socio-linguistic construct. So it is always in a position to denote and mirror a multiplicity of meanings – gender, race, class, personal, collective, national etc. that goes with the term identity itself – which differ from one discipline to another, from one culture/context to another and so on (see for example Butler 1990; Kondo 1990a; 1990b; Adib and Guerrier 2003). Indeed it seems that the notion is 'overused' in many disciplines, but still remains an underspecified construct (Brown 2006). In this context understanding *what is meant by identity* in general and gender identity in particular emerges as a somewhat unfeasible task. Nevertheless academic literature, particularly on gender identity, suggests that the tension between the notions of 'sex' and 'gender' is perhaps a promising starting point to understand what *is* meant by gender identity – indeed the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers in Sri Lanka's apparel industry.

Sex versus Gender

The terms sex and gender are often used interchangeably. However, they denote two different meanings in academic commentary, particularly in western feminist literature. Modern feminist thinking, following Ann Oakley and others, distinguishes between 'sex', the biological phenomenon, and 'gender', the social, one based on a distinction developed by Robert Stoller in 1968 (Cameron 1997; Mills 1997; Simpson 1997; Wodak 1997; Bhogle 1999; Brickell 2006). Indeed Giddens, for example, defines sex as biological or anatomical differences between men and women whereas gender concerns the psychological, social and cultural differences between males and females (cited in Wodak 1997: 3). So it seems that within these binary opposite constitutes – biological sex and cultural gender – gender is articulated as a social construct which is created through the

inter-play of social actors and institutions (Weedon 1987; Thiruchandran 1997; Wodak 1997). On the other hand, these constitutes imply that culture or discourse has no (significant) role to play in determination of 'biologically' determined sex difference – man and woman. It is indeed generally assumed that the sexed body is prior to culture/discourse (Butler 1990). Equally these binary opposite constitutes – biological sex and cultural gender – tend to insist that gender identity is a somewhat enduring quality or characteristic – the essence – of which a person has or is. So gender identity takes on the character of an irreducible essence, as fixed, bounded entity containing some immutable substance (Kondo 1990a; 1995b).

Masculinity and femininity

Thus within these binary opposite constitutes gender identity – as a social construct – does not appear as a free-floating artifice. Rather it is embedded in the body, because throughout history the construction of gender identity is seen to have taken place upon or in relation to an assumedly pregiven sex – sexed body. As a result within the binary opposite constitutes gender emerges as a 'cultural sex'. Consequently, it takes on a culturally specific form against the background of 'biological sex' (Wodak 1997). These binary opposite constitutes, by taking a further step, synthesise notions of masculinity and femininity to further highlight the difference between biological sex – the sexed body – and cultural sex – gendered identity (see Hofstede 1984; 1996; Ricciardelli et al. 1998; Bhogle 1999). And subsequently these distinctive notions – masculine and feminine – supplement male and female respectively and hence signify cultural assumptions about the sexed body – man and woman – which we produce and reproduce in a given culture. Indeed as Hofstede puts it:

> The English language distinguishes between male/female and masculine/feminine. The first pair of words usually refers to what is biologically determined… The second pair usually refers to what, in a given environment, is deemed suitable for members of one sex rather than the other… 'Masculinity' and 'femininity,'… [thus] refer to the dominant sex role pattern in the vast majority of both traditional and modern societies: that of male assertiveness and female nurturance… (1984: 189-190)

Thus within the binary constitutes, biological sex or the sexed body, which is assumedly prior to culture/discourse, is suppressed by cultural sex – masculinity and femininity – as it always goes with and refers to the dominant sex role pattern in a given culture. And, consequently, masculinity–femininity, which are also binary opposite constitutes, cumulate, accumulate and subsequently manifest cultural assumptions on the sexed body itself in this given culture. Therefore, as Basow points out "… masculinity and femininity reflect beliefs about the personal and cultural aspects of men and women, which are acquired as individuals learn about the world and their roles in it" (cited in Ricciardelli et al. 1998: 745).

But as in any other binary opposite constitutes (Spivak 1988b; Derrida 1997) here masculinity appears as the preeminent centre whereas femininity – the peripheral gender identity – is marginalized. So it refers to 'positive' values such as reason, power, truth, autonomy etc. (Atkins 2005d: 267). Feminine identity, on the contrary, goes with 'discreditable qualities' such as passivity and docility (Freud 1986; Mills 1997), likeability (Kendall and Tannen 1997), carnality, irrationality, dependence and the like (Atkins 2005d). Indeed, as Walkerdine argues, since the Enlightenment, if not before, "The rationality of the *cogito* are taken to be a kind of rebirth of the rational self, in this case without the intervention of a woman. The rational self was in this sense a profoundly masculine one

from which the woman was excluded … [thus] The 'thinking' subject was [always] male…" (1989: 269; original emphasis). On the other hand, within the binary opposite constitutes, although 'feminine' specificity or 'uniqueness' is marked, it is often highlighted as a free floating artifice which exists separately from other axes of power relations. Indeed:

> The masculine/feminine binary constitutes not only the exclusive framework in which that specificity can be recognized, but in every other way the "specificity" of the feminine is once again fully decontextualized and separated off analytically and politically from the constitution of class, race, ethnicity, and other axes of power relations…(Butler 1990: 6).

This discursive dominance of these constitutes and their bias towards masculinity is also apparent in work organizations. Therefore in the organizational milieu it is assumed that advancement, supervising others, responsibility, earnings, creativity and the like are more important to men – masculine qualities. In contrast what is more important for women is *not* responsibility, creativity etc., but congenial associates, ample leisure time, physical conditions, variety and the like – these being feminine characteristics (Hofstede 1984: 184). Therefore:

> Woman is defined only by her relation to man, whereas man is defined in himself; he is essential subjectivity, she is inessential; he is subject; she is Other; he is agent; she is object; he is complete; she is lack. (Atkins 2005c: 238)

Thus the identity of woman – femininity – is constructed as the Other of man – masculinity – upon her 'pregiven sex', which assumedly exists prior to culture/discourses. Indeed as … "the most generalised definitions of masculinity and femininity" … denote "…they are *relatively enduring traits* which are more or less rooted in anatomy, physiology, and early

experience, and which generally serve to *distinguish males from females* in appearance, attitudes, and behavior" (Constantinople 2005: 387; emphasis mine).

The disembodiment of female identity

But this accumulation and manifestation of the so-called qualities of masculinity and femininity, as the literature suggests, *is* in process. So the masculine–feminine constitutes are produced, reproduced and historically embedded (Butler 1988; de Riencourt 1997). This (re)production process has a dual effect on these so-called qualities. It, on the one hand, tends to 'disembody' these qualities of masculinity and femininity, as suggested particularly in (some versions of) psychoanalysis (see for example Jung 1959; Freud 1986; Weedon 1987; de Riencourt 1997; Constantinople 2005). Here masculinity and femininity appear not as distinctive ends of a single continuum but as two orthogonal dimensions. So they can coexist within the same individual, disregarding their 'biologically' determined sex (Bhogle 1999), and hence mirror Jungian notions of *animus* – 'man in a woman' – and *anima*; 'woman in a man' (Jung 1959; also de Riencourt 1997). It is indeed believed:

> … what constitutes masculinity or femininity is an unknown characteristic which anatomy cannot lay hold of.

> … We are accustomed to employ 'masculine' and 'feminine' as mental qualities as well, and have in the same way transferred the notion of bisexuality to mental life. Thus we speak of a person, whether male or female, as behaving in a masculine way in one connection and in a feminine way in another. (Freud 1986: 414)

Within this perspective the notion of femininity, particularly after its disembodiment, (apparently) no longer appears as a subordinated identity. Rather it is marked and hence exists and is thus even a benchmark or role model in the work milieu, as some management

literature suggests to us (e.g. Grant 1988; Rosener 1990; Carless 1998). In this market managerialist literature femininity refers to 'blessed' qualities such as empathy; helpfulness; caring and nurturance; interpersonal sensitivity; attentiveness to and acceptance of others and so forth (Fondas 1997: 260). As such femininity is no longer about passivity and docility, as previously assumed, but managerial values and so 'ways women (should) lead' (Grant 1988; Rosener 1990; Carless 1998). Indeed feminine identity appears as something that (the ideal image of) woman is or what she has or should have and hence something that distinguishes her from her other – the man. In fact, as a whole, it is about her 'socially accepted' essential or ideal being which is even an exemplar for her other. Nonetheless, despite this glamorized version of femininity, other researchers are critical not only about the masculinity–femininity constitutes but also about the ways in which these constitutes have been historically (re)produced. They, by radically departing from the essentialist understanding and binary opposite constitutes of gender identity, attempt to explore the performatively constituted nature of gender identity – the ways in which one's 'own acts' tend to produce that person's 'own' gender identity.

Femininity as performative

As de Beauvoir (1972) tells us one is not born, but rather becomes a woman. de Beauvoir's understanding of woman's subjectivity is in fact not either a unified or fixed entity or an essential quality, but the notion of woman as in process – 'becoming' woman (Butler 1990; Jeanes 2007). So it suggests that 'woman' is not a natural fact but a historical idea (Butler 1988: 522). Like de Beauvoir or following her many researchers locate identity in general and gender identity in particular beyond binary opposite constitutes and indeed beyond essentialist understandings of identity. Further they problematize the very notions of the

sexed body and gender identity within which masculinity and femininity are produced and reproduced. They suggest that the notion of sex is *also* a social construct (Butler 1988; 1990; Lorber and Farrell 1991). As such ethnomethodologists and material feminists, for example, reject the distinction between sex and gender. They argue that sex as well as gender is symbolic, political and therefore socially contingent (Brickell 2006: 98). They consequently problematize the very notion of *construction* of gender upon an assumedly pregiven sex (Butler 1990). Sex or the biologically determined body – the sexed body – as they argue is not a passive medium upon which gender is constructed. Rather "… "the body" is itself a construction, as are the myriad "bodies" that constitute the domain of gendered subjects. Bodies cannot be said to have a signifiable existence prior to the mark of their gender…" (Butler 1990: 12). So this suggests that the body also becomes its gender through a series of acts which are historically embedded (Butler 1988: 523).

In this context, inspired by poststructuralist notions, particularly Foucault's (1984; 1993) notions of subject/the self – which cannot be pre-discursive – many of these researchers attempt to articulate the ways in which gender identity has been produced and reproduced through an array of discursive practices. As they argue "Discourses are … a crucially important medium and outcome of the reproduction of subjectivities generally and of gendered subjectivity more specifically" (Collinson 1992: 28-29; also see Weedon 1987: 21). Adhering to Foucauldian notions of power/knowledge these researchers show the way in which discourses, power/knowledge and subjectivity/identity – indeed gender identity – intermingle with each other (Weedon 1987; Collinson 1992; Hughes 2002; Wicks 2002; Rees and Garnsey 2003). As such Hughes, for example, suggests that "The interrelational nature of discourse, power and subjectivity has made it difficult to create neat and distinct

separate subsections" (2002: 13). Besides some emphasise the role of language in constructing identity in general and gender identity in particular (Weedon 1987; Butler 1990; Norton 1997; Hughes 2002; Rees and Garnsey 2003; Brickell 2006; Ybema et al. 2009). Weedon (1987: 21), for example, argues that language is the place where our subjectivity is constructed. Ybema et al. (2009) also suggest that language is a promising path to understand the complexities of the processes of identity formation and construction. Nevertheless some researchers are critical not only about the manner in which the entire debate about gender identity is being carried out but also about over emphasizing language/discourses, as it may tend to narrow down the formation of gender identity to discourse if not language (e.g. Butler 1988; 1990; 2004; Pullen and Knights 2007). As such Butler, for example, cautions that "Gender is not passively scripted on the body, and neither is it determined by nature, language, the symbolic, or overwhelming history of patriarchy" (1988: 531).

These researchers, on the other hand, are eager to point to the blurry nature of the masculine−feminine binary constitutes. They suggest that the binary constitutes are indeed a reproduction of the heterosexual binary opposition – man and woman – that tends to privilege masculine over feminine (Weedon 1987; Walkerdine 1989; Butler 1990; 2004; Brewis et al. 1997; Alvesson 1998; Hall et al. 2007; Pullen and Knights 2007; Schilt and Connell 2007). As they argue, this reproduction takes place within dominant cultural discourses and masculine master narratives. Some would thus caution that even glamorized qualities of the femininity (as described by Grant 1988; Rosener 1990; Carless 1998, for example) also tend to reproduce stereotypical expectations about women in work organizations (Billing and Alvesson 2000). Also they note the shifting nature of

masculinity and femininity from culture to culture and language to language (Weedon 1987). In this context Butler argues:

> To claim that gender is a norm is not quite the same as saying that there are normative views of femininity and masculinity, even though there clearly are such normative views. Gender is not exactly what one "is" nor is it precisely what one "has." Gender is the apparatus by which the production and normalization of masculine and feminine take place along with the interstitial forms of hormonal, chromosomal, psychic, and performative that gender assumes. To assume that gender always and exclusively means the matrix of the "masculine" and "feminine" is precisely to miss the critical point that the production of that coherent binary is contingent, that it comes at a cost, and that those permutations of gender which do not fit the binary are as much a part of gender as its most normative instance. (2004: 42)

Thus it is argued that, even within assumptions about the masculine–feminine binary constitutes, the essentialist subject does not evaporate. Nor do these assumptions rupture the preeminent centre of the masculine subject in the dominant discourses on gender. Rather gender identity is articulated as what one has or is – so-called qualities and traits of men and women – indeed their 'essential being'. On the other hand, these assumptions, more crucially, ignore the apparatus by which production and normalization of these notions take place. So they hide and blur the very notion of gender identity. Therefore many researchers argue that defining woman in relation to man and subsequently constructing woman's identity – feminine – as the Other of man – masculine – is not an innocent project. Rather it is historically embedded and hence an outcome of the patriarchal character of social relations that subordinates female interests to male interests which originated nearly thirty five thousand years ago (de Beauvoir 1972; Weedon 1987; Butler 1988; 1990; 2004; Walkerdine 1989; de Riencourt 1997; Atkins 2005c; 2005d; Pullen and

Knights 2007). It is indeed a 'political' project which *others* the Other as a life not worth living, as Pullen and Knights (2007: 508) put it.

This debate about gender identity not only implies the complex nature of the construction of gender identity as well as the fluidity and fragmented nature of identity itself. It also reminds us of the fact that gender identity is not something what we have or are. So it is not a 'thing' which is constructed upon an assumedly pregiven sex. Indeed as Butler argues:

> ...*gender* is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes…[Rather] the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence…In this sense, gender is always doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed….[Indeed] There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results. (1990: 34; original emphasis)

In this light, gender identity is not what a person *is*, but what that person *does* and vice versa. This doing or performativity thus constructs (our) gender identity. Indeed gender identity cannot be expressed but on the contrary is performatively constituted. It is what we produce and reproduce through the array of discursive practices – nevertheless it cannot be narrowed down to discourses or language itself. So in summary these researchers claim – and also it is now a widely agreed stance – that gender identity is not fixed, but on the contrary fluid, multifaceted and historically embedded socio-linguistic construct that is in process. It is indeed always subject to production and reproduction through and by the inter-play of social actors, institutions, habits and regulatory ideals, behaviour etc. (Thiruchandran 1997) – something always remains under construction (Ybema et al. 2009).

However, this interesting debate leaves us with 'new' problems or perhaps reminds us of old problems as far as the formation and construction of gender identity in work organizations is concerned. In fact if gender identity is a process which emerges during or as a result of our discursive practices – performativity – what does '(un)doing' gender tell us about the formation of female (shopfloor) workers' identity in work organizations? Is there a doer behind this deed – (un)doing gender/work identities? If so what role does the doer play in the formation of gender identity in general and female (shopfloor) workers' identity in particular? Indeed what *can be* meant by gender identity in the organizational context?

Un-Doing Gender at Work

As a review of the literature shows there is a tireless effort among researchers in management and organization studies to explore and understand the nature and formation of gender identity in work organizations. These attempts are inspired by many different theoretico-analytical stances – a qualitative-quantitative mix approach (e.g. Ely 1995); a positivistic framework such as the gender role framework (e.g. Bagger et al. 2008) and institutional theory (e.g. Wicks 2002) are a few examples. The majority of these researchers, however, generally adhere to social constructivism and thus view gender at work as an ongoing social or socio-linguistic construct (e.g. Ely 1995; Rees and Garnsey 2003). Relatedly the poststructuralist approach to subjectivity has also begun to play an influential role in researching gender identity at work (for example see Linstead and Brewis 2004; Pullen and Knights 2007) as it attempts to surpass the existing limits of our understandings of the phenomenon.

The researchers who adhere to social constructivism in general and researchers who are inspired by poststructuralism in particular are eager to explore, dissect and problematize gender identity at work in a variety of ways. They articulate the ways in which organizational discourses tend to create gender identity and synthesise the relationship between power and gender subjectivity in work organizations (Collinson 1992; Wicks 2002; Frenkel 2008). By critically analysing women's proportional representation in the upper layers of work organizations, Ely (1995), for example, shows how the relatively low representation of women in upper layers of work organizations affects the construction of their – women managers' – identity at work. In her analysis she challenges the stance that gender is an objective property. Instead she argues that gender in the work context is an ongoing social construct. Others articulate the relationship between humour/jokes and the masculine identity of shopfloor male workers (Collinson 1988; 1992). Some researchers discuss how dress relates to, informs or is informed by gender identity in work organizations (Brewis et al. 1997; Humphreys and Brown 2002). As far as the 'ordinary' woman's efforts to absorb available feminine images are concerned, Brewis et al., for example, argue that "In dressing herself in stockings, a dress and makeup, a woman is constructing herself as feminine, she is creating a simulacrum …" (1997: 1285). Others discuss the way in which gender identity mixes with occupational as well as family if not home-based identities (Alvesson 1998; Hall et al. 2007).

Likewise masculine–feminine constitutes are also one of the major targets of many of these researchers. These researchers dissect the fragile and complex nature of masculine and feminine identities at work (Brewis et al. 1997; Alvesson 1998; Hall et al. 2007; Jeanes 2007; Schilt and Connell 2007). Hall et al. (2007), for example, explain the complex and shifting nature of the

masculine identities of men who work as firefighters, hairdressers and estate agents. As they point out these men perform contradictory masculinities, nevertheless "Stereotypes of the muscular firefighter, the glib estate agent and the glamorous hairdresser do resonate with dominant discourses of masculinity that men in these occupations actively engage with" (2007: 549). It has also been suggested that 'feminization' of work and client relations tend to create a strain on the gender identity of male workers which compels them to behave in a more feminine manner at work, despite their masculine identity (Alvesson 1998).

Exploring the intersection of other identities such as class, race, ethnicity etc. with gender identity at work is also one of the major objectives of many of these researchers (Collinson 1992; Adib and Guerrier 2003; Wicks 2002; Hall et al. 2007; Holvino 2008). Adib and Guerrier (2003), for example, articulate the simultaneous and shifting nature of gender and ethnic identities. So they emphasise the importance of theorizing gender identity as an integral part of other identities. Holvino (2008) develops a similar argument. Likewise Collinson (1992: 38) cautions the risk of compartmentalizing class from gender when examining the interrelated conditions. He argues that such compartmentalizing fails to capture the interconnection between these two analytical categories. Meantime Hall et al. (2007) discuss the shifting nature of gender, age and class identities and their intermingling in the work context. They show the ways in which men's identities oscillate between relational or residual identities such as the working class hero and the self-made man.

In this complex but interesting debate about the nature and formation of gender identity in work organizations, some researchers even attempt to explore the emerging dynamics of gender identity at work, for example the impact of transsexuality – transmen and

transwomen – upon gender subjectivity or existing gender identities, masculinity–femininity, in work organizations (Schilt and Connell 2007). Overall there is emphasis on the fluid and shifting nature of gender identities and indeed the becoming of gender at work (Ely 1995; Adib and Guerrier 2003; Hall et al. 2007; Jeans 2007; Ybema et al. 2009). Inspired by Judith Butler's notions of gender, some would thus even call for 'undoing' gender, because as they argue undoing tends to dissolve and unsettle existing and restrictive gendered norms as well as gender subjectivities at work (Hall et al. 2007; Pullen and Knights 2007; Jeanes 2007; Schilt and Connell 2007).

Thus suffice it to say that the current account of if not the ongoing debate about gender identities at work provides a complex but panoramic picture about the nature and formation of gender identities in work organizations. However, even within this inspiring debate, the role of HRM and its apparatuses in the process of the formation of identity at work remains under-researched. Literature on the formation and construction of gender identity of shopfloor workers, primarily female shopfloor workers in the Global South – who live under the banner of HRM and indeed who are subject to its multiple managerial apparatuses – on the other hand, is virtually nonexistent.

HRM, Collective Selves, and Un-doing Gender in a Subaltern Context

In her comments on Keenoy and Anthony's (1992) essay, 'HRM: Metaphor, Meaning and Morality,' where they argue that HRM – a cultural construct of late capitalism – is part of the commodification process within which the consumer becomes the image of the product that s/he purchases/consumes, Legge questions "How then has HRM rhetoric [language] been used to construct appropriate employee identities…?" (2005: 124). Despite this query

if not encouragement to explore what role HRM plays in the formation of employee identities in work organizations, as I have established, it remains a largely ignored aspect even in critical studies of HRM. Only a few attempts have been made to understand this role. Legge (1999b) herself, for example, analyses the market images of employee as 'commodity', 'resource' as well as 'internal customer' in the work context. By synthesising the relationship between the language of consumption in the postmodern context and the notion of the internal customer in HRM, she argues:

> The employee as 'internal customer' has a complex and symbiotic relationship with the employee as 'external customer'. Thus the representation [construction of identity] of employees as internal customers is intimately bound up with issues of quality and responsiveness to the external customer. (1999b: 249)

Here Legge provides a clue about the ways in which HRM tends to construct employee identities at work by intermingling with other identities (here that of the external customers). And then she claims the agenda of this process by arguing "Conceptualizing [identity of] employees as commodities and management as the buyer and use of that commodity justifies managerial prerogative and, by extension, the value of management" (1999b: 259). However, she does not explicitly tell us about the way in which HRM tends to construct employee identity either as the 'internal customer' or as the 'commodity'. This is because the prime focus of this research – like much other relevant research – is not on the role of HRM in the formation of employee identities in work organizations.

In this context Coates (2003) makes a commendable effort to explore and understand the way in which HRM – performance appraisals – tends to construct gender identities at work. Based on qualitative research – a case study of the National Health Service in the UK –

Coates shows the manner in which managerial apparatuses, primarily those of HRM, manage the meaning, identity and sexuality of women in work organizations. As she points out HRM or certainly performance appraisals reiterate the 'established' feminine identity of women workers. Indeed bringing empirical evidence from her research site, which she calls WellCo, Coates notes:

> …there was little space at WellCo for women or their expression of any identity not immediately recognizable as feminine. To present the correct identity of a 'WellCo manager', a woman must present the subjectified image of *womanhood* by which she was first judged. Only then did the ability to perform the task come into the reckoning. In spite of attempts to promote the identity of *good* employee, it was the feminine qualities WellCo judged women on. (2003: 580; original emphasis)

Coates thus further articulates the way in which performance appraisals are being used as a means to establish WellCo's version of women's identity – feminine identity – and subsequently as a means to assess the femininity of women in WellCo.

Apart from these limited efforts, literature on HRM as well as on gender largely remains silent about the role of HRM in the formation of gender identities in work organizations. Therefore, when it comes to the role of HRM in the formation of female shopfloor workers' identities, research findings are virtually nonexistent, even though many, as we have already seen, claim the intersection of ethnicity, class and/or occupational identities with gender identities at work (Collinson 1988; 1992; Adib and Guerrier 2003; Hall et al. 2007). This absence is equally evident as far as literature on the role of language(s) of HRM in the formation of employee identities is concerned. Nevertheless many researchers lay emphasis on the crucial role of language in the formation of identities in general and gender identities

in particular (Weedon 1987; Butler 1990; Kondo 1990a; Norton 1997; Hughes 2002; Ybema et al. 2009). The noticeable absence of academic literature and research on these areas is, however, not a surprise. Rather it is, as I argue, the outcome of two particular trajectories in HRM research.

On the one hand, there is a general tendency among research in HRM as a whole and even among critical research in HRM to focus mostly on meta-narratives of HRM such as hard–soft images, strategic integration etc., rather than on local, subversive narratives of managing labour in capitalist work organizations (for critique see Steyaert and Janssens 1999). This tendency is perhaps due to the popular trend in or biased character of HRM itself as Storey already tells us – indeed "A great deal of HR activity and energy [as well as HRM research] is directed at managers themselves, rather than shopfloor employees" (1995:7). As a result of this bias towards managers, Storey further tells us, that "… the panoply of HRM technology is seen in its fullest form in the management of managers" (1995: 7).

On the other hand, as we have already recognized, there is another general tendency among HRM researchers, particularly among critical researchers, to articulate the language(s) of HRM as rhetoric (e. g. Keenoy 1990; 1997; Legge 1995; 2005; Dickens 1998). In fact the implications of the language(s) of HRM and its role in the construction of not only employee identities but also social reality in work organizations remain largely under-researched. In this context, I argue that we need to reassess what inspiration literature on HRM and gender identities at work provides us with to understand the formation and construction of gender identities in a non-western socio-organizational context – Sri

Lanka's apparel industry. Indeed does it – the literature that is articulated largely based on white men and women's experiences in the West – tell us anything about the narration, doing and restoration of the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor employees in Sri Lanka's apparel industry?

Collective selves

Kondo in her highly regarded text, *Crafting Selves,* writes:

> A brief consideration of work done on "the Japanese self," in the light of my particular experiences in the factory and the neighbourhood, can point us toward the profound challenges such scholarship offers to seemingly incorrigible Western assumptions about the primacy of "the individual" and the boundedness and fixity of personal identity. My neighbors, friends, co-workers, and acquaintances never allowed me to forget that contextually constructed, relationally defined selves are particularly resonant in Japan. I was never allowed to be an autonomous, freely operating "individual." (1990a: 26)

Here Kondo reminds us of the contextually constructed character of identity or selves in a non-western social milieu, Japan. So she suggests that the notion of 'the self' as articulated in the West is not the self or identity which we may encounter in non-western societies – the Other of the West. Rather as well as its formation it is a culturally specific and historically embedded construct. Indeed like a few others (e.g. Nakamura 1964; Pang 2006) Kondo reminds us of the irreducibility of collective selves/identity [16] in non-western

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[16] It should be noted here that the notion of collective identity in non-western societies, for example China, India and Japan as well as Sri Lanka does not denote the so-called collectivism as portrayed by Hofstede (1984) as the binary opposite of 'individualism'. Such modernist binary opposite constructs – individualism–collectivism, masculinity–femininity, public–private and the like – as established elsewhere always tend to

societies to the western notions of the subject/self in general and the essentialist understanding of the self – which takes on the character of an irreducible essence and indeed the Transcendental Signified, in a Saussurean sense – in particular (Kondo 1990a: 35).

Paradoxically enough, like Kondo, many researchers claim this fluid, fragmented, culturally specific and contextually constructed nature of (gender) identity, but somewhat differently. Indeed, as we already have recognized, they lay emphasis on the intersection of gender identities with race, ethnicity and the like (Butler 1990; 2004; Adib and Guerrier 2003; Holvino 2008). Here gender and indeed gender identity is viewed *not* as a sole outcome or vis-à-vis (the notion of) 'universal' patriarchy and indeed transcendental gender identity in the West (for critique, see Butler 1990;[17] also Spivak 1988a; Mohanty 1991). In contrast it is viewed as a socially negotiated, culturally specific construct which intermingle with other axes of power relations such as race, ethnicity etc. Nevertheless Butler (1990) cautions us against the potential risks of this antifoundationalist approach. She argues that "It would be wrong to assume in advance that there is a category of "women" [women's identity] that simply needs to be filled in with various components of race, class, age, ethnicity, and sexuality in order to become complete" (1990: 20-21).

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privilege one over the other by creating a preeminent centre which is always the former but not the latter (for critique see Derrida 1981; 1997; Spivak 1988b).

[17] Here Butler (1990: 5) accepts the rupture of the notion of universal patriarchy and so aptly rejects transcendental gender identity in the West, even though she hardly takes notice of the collective selves of the (non-western) Other. However, in her later essays, Butler discusses, more or less, this issue – i.e., non-western selves. For example, by referring to Spivak, she (2004: 230) marks the exclusion of the subaltern women activists from the parameters of the western subject.

In this context, some researchers, by going further, insist on the irreducibility of gender identities in non-western societies to the western notion of subject. Adib and Guerrier (2003), for example, show the way in which the ethnic identity of women in a particular ethnic group tends to differentiate them from other women at work. By critically dissecting white liberal feminism from the perspective of women of colour, Holvino (2008) also articulates the ways in which identities of women of colour intersect with their gender identities. This intersection, as Holvino further points out, subsequently leads to create a 'unique' if not subordinated position and so identity for women of colour in gendered work organizations in the West. In the meantime others articulate the ways in which local culture tends to construct gender identity in work organizations. Frenkel (2008), for example, suggests that, despite global pressures, local culture performs the major role in the formation of professional gender identities in Israeli high-tech industry. She argues that "…the space created between the global and the local cultural repertoires that shape gender identities has allowed Israeli high-tech women to redefine the meaning of femininity in the workplace" (2008: 371). In the mean time Lynch (2007) illustrates the ways in which socio-cultural forces and processes affect the construction of what she calls (identity of) 'Good girls in Sri Lankan modernity' as far as the formation of women factory workers' subjectivities in Sri Lanka's apparel industry is concerned. Hewamanne (2003; 2008) develops a similar argument. She shows how middle class ideal womanhood in Sri Lanka moulds identities of factory women in the apparel industry. In this context, by emphasising the collective selves in Japanese work milieu, Kondo argues:

> Identity is not a fixed "thing," it is negotiated, open, shifting, ambiguous, the result of *culturally available meanings* and the open-ended, power-laden enactments of those meanings in everyday situations. (1990a: 24; emphasis mine)

Thus suffice it to say that not only other axes of power relations such as class, ethnicity etc. but also the local culture as well as history (Butler 1988; Brickell 2006) play a crucial role in the formation and construction of gender identities at work. Therefore I argue that comprehending the role of these social constructs, forces and processes is vital to *re*narrate (doing) the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers in Sri Lanka's apparel industry. This is because, on the one hand, there are many cultural, socio-economic, historico-political forces and processes that create, shape and align not only women's subjectivities but also the nature of managing labour in Sri Lanka. On the other hand, gender identities in Sri Lankan society are more often blurred, collective and shifting and hence always in process (Jayawardena 1994; de Silva 1998). This culturally and historically specific nature of (collective) gender identities in Sri Lanka (Jayawardena 1994) thus always demarcates the gap, more or less, between gender identity in the West and gender identities in this part of the world – Sri Lanka. Indeed it exemplifies how the (non-western) Other's multiple realities of the formation of gender identity differ from meta-narratives of the formation of identity in the West.

Un-doing women's identities in Sri Lanka

As literature suggests, throughout recorded history, particularly in medieval society, women in Sri Lanka enjoyed a relatively privileged position in the family as well as in wider social contexts (Ponnambalam 1987; Metthananda 1990; Dewaraja 1995). Women's position and hence their social identity were in a somewhat respectable position as compared to their western counterparts who were, for example, subject to 'witch hunting' in medieval times (see Federici 2004). The traditional law in Sri Lanka which is known as the 'Kandyan Law' led to equal status for women with men, particularly in their marital

relationships. Accordingly "Once married, a (Kandyan) woman was under no [legal] disability, the property of the wife was separated and was entirely at her disposal" (Metthananda 1990: 55). In fact in the *binna* marriage[18] which relegates the husband to a subordinate position the wife is the head of the family (Ponnambalam 1987: 184). Thus under the Kandyan Law:

> In the husband's absence the wife was regarded as the manager of his affairs. When the need arose she was permitted to use his property for the maintenance and the benefit of the family…The wife could sell the produce and even mortgage the lands if necessary, but the husband could not make such use of the wife's property without the latter's consent. (Metthananda 1990: 56)

The nature of society in medieval Sri Lanka, inspired largely by Buddhism, thus preserved a socially regarded female identity. Nevertheless her identity remained mainly as the ideal mother and devoted wife in the monogamous family and hence as the Other of her husband – the man (Metthananda 1990).

This relatively privileged position enjoyed by women in the family as well as in wider Sri Lankan society dramatically deteriorated after the colonial intervention, particularly after the introduction of the Roman-Dutch Law.[19] As Ponnambalam (1987: 101- 102) notes, as a consequence of the husband's marital power in the Roman-Dutch common law, a married woman was under a contractual disability. As a result she was no longer entitled to enter into a binding contract in her own right as she had been able to under the traditional law.

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[18] The traditional (Kandyan) law distinguishes two forms of marriage: *diga* and *binna*. *Binna* marriage was one in which the husband went to reside in his wife's parents' house (Metthananda 1990: 48-49).

[19] A legal system based on the Roman Law was introduced to Sri Lanka by the Dutch colonial rulers during the 17th and 18th centuries.

Furthermore revivalists'[20] struggles with British colonial rulers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, for example, led to the construction of the 'Sinhala-Buddhist woman' (identity) as the Other of the 'Burgher-Christian woman' (Jayawardena 1994; 2000; Hewamanne 2008). In this endeavour, as Jayawardena (1994: 121) notes, the *Gihivinaya*[21] of the *Sigalovada Sutta*[22] was used to reinforce the manner in which the wife serves the husband. The utilitarian emphasis on her work, discipline and thrift was also reinforced by using texts from the *Anguttara Nikaya.*[23] This newly articulated identity of women in colonial Sri Lanka is well documented in revivalists' texts (see Jayawardena 1994). For example, as narrated in a novel titled *Dingiri Menike* by Piyadasa Sirisena, one of the key advocates of the revivalists' struggle, Sinhala-Buddhist woman:

> … (1) treasures Buddhism more than her life; (2) respects Sinhala family customs; (3) behaves in strict accordance with such customs; (4) is humble; (5) is satisfied with what is available; (5) is happy and contented; (6) looks after the welfare of others even at the risk of her own; (8) rejects all vices; (9) dresses in accordance with custom and situation; (10) is beautiful; (11) can read and understand; and (12) has a good knowledge of the Sinhala language. (Jayawardena 1994:121)

Thus as many researchers and scholars point out women's social status and identity in contemporary Sri Lankan society has been largely moulded and aligned by the revivalists' ideal Sinhala-Buddhist womanhood. It, as we have already seen, is indeed an outcome of historico-political and socio-cultural forces and processes (Ponnambalam 1987;

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[20] A bourgeois and petit bourgeois movement in colonial Sri Lanka which resisted British colonial rulers. Revivalists' struggle and ideology were inspired largely by Buddhism (see Jayawardena 1994; 2000).

[21] The code of conduct or rules of discipline for laypeople in Buddhism.

[22] A discourse to *Sigala*, son of a householder, which was also known as the layperson's code of discipline in Buddhism, chanted by the Buddha (see Rahula 1972).

[23] *Anguttara Nikaya* which means numerical or gradual discourses is the fourth of the five *nikayas* (discourses) in the Buddha's teaching (see Saddhatissa 1970).

Metthananda 1990; Jayawardena 1994; 2000; Dewaraja 1995; de Silva, 1998; Lynch 2007; Hewamanne 2003; 2008). Doing or narrating woman's identity in Sri Lankan society, as in any other societies, is thus always in process, always subject to renarration. It intersects with other identities or what Butler (1990) calls other axes of power relations such as class, ethnicity, religion etc. which are also in process. And indeed it echoes the nature and constraints of socio-economic and historico-political contexts within which identities are constructed, done and narrated (see Jayawardena 1994; 2000; Hyndman and de Alwis 2004).

This historico-political embeddedness and cultural specificity is equally true as far as managing labour in the Sri Lankan organizational milieu is concerned (de Silva 1964; Jayawardena 1971; de Silva 1973; Kurian 1985; de Silva 1998), even though it remains largely under-researched. For example, the concepts, tools, techniques and apparatuses of managing labour in the Sri Lankan context did not evolve in the factory system as in the West but mainly in the colonial plantation estates. Indeed unlike in the West 'handling labour matters' – recruitment, selection and the like – were initially carried out by a 'labour headman' called 'kangani' (de Silva 1973; Kurian 1985; Jayawardena 2000). As history suggests the kangani's arbitrary power over plantation workers and its patriarchal character were prevalent and persisted even after the introduction of labour legislation, mostly during the late nineteenth century, and after that. Indeed as described by the Ceylon Labour Commission in 1908 – the period in which the personnel function evolved in the West:

> This system, commonly called the 'Kangany system', is…of a purely patriarchal
> character in its origin and principles. The kangany or labour headman was in the
> beginning, and still is in a large number of the older and more solidly established
> estates, the senior member of a family group composed of his personal relatives, to

whom may be added other families drawn from villages in Southern India from the vicinity of which he and his relations also come. (cited in de Silva 1973: 25)

This historico-political embeddedness and culturally specificity nature – of women's identities and managing labour/employment in Sri Lanka – I argue informs us of the importance of understanding and analysing these phenomena and their interconnections, if any, in relation to the context in which they emerged, are constructed and take place. These historico-political trajectories are also crucial, more or less, as far as the formation and construction of female shopfloor workers' collective identity in the Sri Lanka's apparel industry is concerned (e.g. Lynch 2002; 2007; Hewamanne 2003; 2008). As such doing and narrating the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers in the industry, I argue, should be understood, undone and renarrated not as a fixed, coherent, and ahistorical entity. Instead it should be treated as a discursively articulated identity that was constructed in a particular historico-political context in the industry – the apparel industry in its nascent liberalized context – and so that remains 'under construction' in the present-day industry, perhaps as part and parcel of the multiple apparatuses of managing (female) shopfloor labour and indeed of (un)doing HRM in the industry.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have reviewed the relevant literature relating to this thesis in two parts, on managing labour, and on the formation of gender identities in work organizations. Prevailing notions and apparatuses of managing labour in work organizations have accumulated and hence been deployed mostly in the name of or under the banner of HRM since the late 1970s in the West. Therefore in part one of the chapter, first, I recapitulate the

historical evolution of HRM in western work organizations. Then I critically dissect concepts *in* and the concept *of* HRM with a view to searching for the nature and identity of the phenomenon of HRM. Having established the ambiguity not only of the concept of HRM but of its concepts then I review literature on 'critical HRM' to problematize the agenda of gender of HRM and its language(s). In so doing I argue that there is a noticeable tendency among critical researchers and especially feminist critics of HRM to understand and conceptualize the (apparent) gap between what HRM offers and its 'real' practice in the workplace through binary opposite constitutes – the rhetoric and reality of HRM. This tendency, as we have recognized, subsequently narrows down the language(s) of HRM, more or less, into so-called rhetoric. Nevertheless some researchers are critical about the tendency as a whole. They suggest that rhetoric and reality are not separable from one another, as rhetoric is also part of the so-called reality of HRM itself.

In part two of the chapter I move to literature on the notion of identity in general and the formation of gender identities at work in particular. Here I critically dissect the western notions of subjectivity/identity, mainly gender identity, to understand '(un)doing' gender at work. I problematize the essentialist understanding of identity and its binary opposite constitutes – (biological) sex–(cultural) gender and masculinity–femininity. In so doing, inspired by poststructuralist notions of gender subjectivity, I argue that gender identity is not something that a person is or has, but on the contrary what that person does during and/or through discursive practices – i.e., performativity. Then I critically review commentary on the formation of gender identities in the organizational context. Here I pay special attention to literature that articulates the way in which different discursive practices, particularly HRM, tend to construct women's identity at work. As I recognize, there is,

however, a noticeable absence of literature that articulates not only the role of HRM in the formation of gender identity in work organizations but also the formation of female shopfloor workers' identity at work.

In this context, having suggested the shifting and fragmented nature of gender identity and its intersection with race, class, culture etc., I argue that doing and narrating the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers in Sri Lanka's apparel industry should be understood if not undone or renarrated by locating this identity in the discursive context within which it has been done, narrated and restored. In fact then I highlight, to some extent, literature that reflects the historically embedded and culturally specific nature of women's identities in Sri Lanka and their shifting and fragmented nature in particular and managing labour in Sri Lanka in general. In conclusion I therefore argue that now the gap this thesis addresses in terms of HRM and gender/work identity literature is two fold. On the one hand, there is lack of literature that articulates the formation of shopfloor (female) workers' identities and the role of HRM in this process in general and in the non-western work context in particular. On the other hand, there is a profound gap between the notions of the subject/identity in the West as well as the empirical findings that are articulated mostly based on white men's and women's experiences in the West and the collective identities as well as the multiple realities in non-western societies – indeed the multiple realities of 'factory women' in Sri Lanka's apparel industry and their 'collective' selves. Therefore to 'fill' these gaps and indeed to renarrate (doing) the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers in Sri Lanka's apparel industry, now I move to capture and conceptualize the nature and disposition of HRM in the industry.

CHAPTER 2

Conceptualizing Managing Labour:
HRM as a 'web of texts'

Introduction

As we have seen in the literature review (chapter 1), phenomenon of HRM emerged in the West as part and parcel of its socio-economic reality in the 1980s. This new fashion of managing labour subsequently overcame geographical boundaries and intruded on non-western socio-organizational spheres in different time periods. In fact it emerged or appeared in Sri Lanka and hence in Sri Lanka's apparel industry – the landscape of this thesis – in the 1990s as a trendy and palatable supplement of the country's long established tradition of personnel management.[24] In this chapter I discuss what this largely western, mostly American phenomenon (Guest 1990) looks like when it appears in this subaltern context. Indeed in this chapter I 'conceptualize' or 'theorize' the nature and disposition of the phenomenon of HRM in Sri Lanka's apparel industry with a view to analysing its role in the process of the formation and construction of female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* and indeed the *childrenization* of female (shopfloor) labour in the

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[24] Research on the historical evolution of employment management in Sri Lanka is virtually nonexistent. However, some of the well-established corporate entities of the country claim they have been operating personnel department or division since as early as the1940s. As part of these developments in the corporate sector, the Institute of Personnel Management of Sri Lanka was set up in 1959. This was incorporated in 1976 by an Act of Parliament. Also personnel management has been an element of university curricula of management education in Sri Lanka since the early 1960s. The subject of personnel management in the curricula was, however, gradually replaced by or re-titled 'HRM' in the 1990s. For example, in the early 1990s the Open University of Sri Lanka introduced HRM as a major subject for its Diploma in Management programme. This trend is also evident in traditional universities. For example, the University of Sri Jayewardenepura and the University of Kelaniya introduced special degree programmes in HRM in the 1990s by setting up either specialized academic departments or divisions in HRM (for detail, see Jayawardena 2004).

industry. This attempt is, however, not a rigorous conceptualization, woven or constructed based purely upon the existing academic literature and/or theories. Instead this is a new kind of 'self-reflexivity' (Eagleton 1990) which merges my experience and empirical findings in the apparel industry with the (western) academic literature on the phenomenon with a view to discerning the nature and disposition of HRM when it appears in this subaltern context.

I began this chapter with a brief introduction to the socio-economic and historic-political context in which HRM emerged in Sri Lanka's apparel industry. Drawing empirical evidence – which is largely based on my fieldwork – from the apparel industry I then articulate how HRM has created its own rupture at the very moment it emerged in the industry. This rupture, as I suggest, led to a split in managing labour in the industry into two distinct sets of managerial apparatus, which I call 'doing' and 'undoing' HRM. As I further suggest these apparatuses – which are embedded and embodied in which I call 'textual HRM' and 'local texts'[25] of managing labour in the industry – cannot be separated from each other. Instead they intermingle and are interconnected with each other like the threads of a web.

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[25] I use the term 'textual HRM' to signify multiple linguistic categories and indeed the language(s) of HRM that are embedded and embodied in 'official' texts of HRM such as employee handbooks, performance appraisal forms, training manuals etc. The majority of these texts are in written form(s). Nevertheless there are some oral texts such as (transcripts of) dialogues and conversations in a counselling session. The official texts are woven and interwoven by the agents of the 'epistemic community' of HRM (*viz*. HR professionals, managers, non-managerial workers, academics, business consultants, researchers, textbook writers, policy makers, professional institutions, business schools etc.), those who produce and reproduce 'knowledge' or 'episteme' of HRM. On the other hand, the term 'local texts' signifies oral texts (*viz*. speeches and dialogues, yarns etc.) and written texts (*viz*. films, news reportage, pomes etc.) which are embedded and embodied in a variety of unrelated as well as related subjects, issues or narratives such a gender, love, sexuality, exploitation and so forth. I explain these 'concepts' in more detail as this chapter unfolds.

In this context, inspired by poststructuralist notions of language, finally I synthesize the ways in which the multiple signifiers of textual HRM and local texts intermingle and entwine with each other in the process of (un)doing HRM in the industry. I describe how the (possibility of) meaning(s) of the multiple signifiers of textual HRM and of local texts *substitute* for each other as the signifiers oscillate from one context to another. In my concluding remarks I argue that this dangerous supplement is the 'thing' which tends to determine, more or less, the nature and disposition of HRM – its becoming – in the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry. The chapter concludes with a 'new' or alternative theoretical construct – HRM as a 'web of texts'.

Feminization and Managing (Female) Labour

The feminization of Sri Lanka's global apparel industry, as we have seen, emerged as part of the liberalization of the country's economy in the late 1970s. The feminization process, however, did not lead a recognition of the young migrant women who became factory workers in this localized global factory floor either as equal members of the country's (traditional) 'working class' or proletarian women in the Global South. Rather their socio-organizational role as wage labourers was marginalized and restricted, more or less, into the role and image of rustic (migrant) young women (*gode ganu lamai*) not only in the wider social milieu but also in the industry itself, particularly in the Katunayake FTZ (see Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; Hewamanne 2003; 2008; Attanapola 2005; Samanmali 2007). This rather strange nature of feminization and less commitment of global corporations as well as of their local partners in the industry, including the UNP government, to safeguard the workers' welfare and well-being led to and strengthened the virtual wage-slavery in the industry. As a result these migrant factory workers, the majority

of the industry workforce, were subject to many very problematic forces and processes such as sexual harassment and assaults etc. (see Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; Samanmali 2007).

In this peculiar industrial milieu – which is not common in post-independence Sri Lanka[26] – in which workers were not unionised a 'monarchic-type' wage-labour relationship emerged as the prime means of managing (shopfloor) labour in the industry, particularly in the Katunayake FTZ. For example, as Devanarayana notes:

> …at many garment factories workers are expected to sew 60 pieces per hour, of collars, pockets and hems, which are considered difficult parts. The workers are not in a position to complain, if they can manage only 45 pieces. In the factory they too work like machines and for the slightest mistake, they are inhumanly [inhumanely] punished. Making them stand in the sun, knocking on heads, pricking them with scissors or throwing scissors at them, denying overtime work, issuing warning letters, verbal abuse and suspension without pay for a few days are some of the punishments meted out to them. (1997: 17; see also Silva 1997; Samanmali 2007)

As history suggests the rationale behind this type of wage-labour relationship – that took place mostly under the banner of 'personnel management' – was primarily two fold. On the one hand, there were many artificial barriers that prevented workers developing collective movements in the industry. [27] So the workers' voices largely remained (officially)

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[26] As history suggests much more adverse 'monarchic-type' industrial relations and labour conditions were evident in the British plantation estates in colonial Sri Lanka – Ceylon. Their roots and shadows are still noticeable, more or less, in the plantation estates even in post-independence Sri Lanka (see, for example, Kurian 1985; Jayawardena 2000).

[27] According to Article 14(1) of the 1978 Constitution of Sri Lanka, freedom to form and join a trade union is a fundamental right. This right, particularly in the FTZs, was, however, discouraged by the Greater Colombo Economic Commission Law No. 4 of 1978 – the major statutory arm of attracting foreign investors, primarily to the FTZs, since the economic liberalization of the country. Also since the mid 1980s trade union activity has been restricted if not prohibited not only in the FTZs but also in the entire country by the imposition of emergency regulations (see Gunawardana and Biyanwila 2008; also Coomaraswamy and Reyes 2004). These

unreported and unaccounted for, despite some individual and collective resistance by the workers (see Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; *Makena Mathaka* 2007). On the other hand, the gender makeup of the industry, where 80 percent of its workforce consists of traditionally unemployed young women (Jayaweera 2000; 2002; de Silva 2002), allowed the owners of the apparel manufacturing companies to 'handle labour matters' with few or no specific policies about employment management. As such these workers were often categorised as easygoing non-bargaining type young women who were typically 'dowry seekers' for their marriages[28] (de Silva 2002; Lynch 2002; 2007). Thus the wage- slavery of factory workers, as buttressed and endorsed by the monarchic-type wage-labour relationship, was rather explicit in the industry in its nascent liberalized economic context, the late 1970s to mid 1980s.

The 'shift' in managing labour

However, the emerging socio-economic and socio-political reality in the country and this localized global factory floor during the late 1980s tended to 'disestablish' the established norms and means of managing labour in the industry. As a result in the early 1990s the industry had to adopt a 'new' set of managerial apparatuses of managing labour/employment to cope with this emerging reality.[29] This new set of managerial

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unfair and artificial barriers preserved and buttressed the monarchic-type wage-labour relationship in the industry, particularly in the Katunayake FTZ.

[28] This 'dowry seeker' image and mentality is noticeable even in worker-feminist collectives' publications in the Katunayake FTZ. For example, 'plans for married life' is one of the most common questions asked of women factory workers in the regular article titled *Diriya Katha* (Courageous Woman) in the *Dabindu* periodical (see for example *Dabindu* 2006a; *Dabindu* 2006b; *Dabindu* 2007a).

[29] The 1990s marked one of the major breakthroughs in Sri Lanka's political history. It was the aftermath of the late 80s youth insurrection that cost nearly 60,000 lives (see Gunaratna 1990; also Moore 1993) including 15 workers in the Katunayake FTZ (Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997). Also it was the period that ended 17 years of rule by the rightist UNP government that introduced liberal economic policy to Sri Lanka. So the

apparatuses was 'the way forward' as well as 'the fashion' of managing labour during this period. It was, as we have seen in the West in the 1980s, promoted under the banner of HRM. For example, Gamini, the General Manager (GM) of ChillCo – with whom we will closely interact in chapter 5 – narrates how ChillCo had responded to this emerging reality in the 1990s during my interview with him:

> And from there was another change where we were talking more loudly about people recognizing their skills. And then in 1992 we completely stopped checking people [at the security gate when they go home after work]. And his [newly appointed GM of ChillCo in this period] story was that, you know, [if] you can trust the person for eight hours to get your work done and then how the hell you can't trust [them] when the person goes out and comes in. Right.., it was at that time about 45 minutes a long queue where every employee['s] body checks and then [they] went out. And you know many of those who would have come from long distances they go to go back home. And then maybe they cooked for their children because most of them are female. And then still you keep them for about 45 minutes at the gate… After you stop, after stopping checking. But only thing is you go to narrate that story throughout for the new employees to know because otherwise they won't know [this history of managing employment]. You know, this is [now a] basically trusted environment. When a new person enters, you know, nobody checks. So that person doesn't understand the value for, value of that freedom. So what happened these are the, you know, the basic turning points [of managing labour]. There we saw real change in [managing] people.

Abandoning the 'old' control apparatuses and subsequently adopting this 'new' set of managerial apparatuses, however, neither implies that the industry embraced a passion for HRM – as articulated in market managerialism and indeed HRM as such – nor means that

early and mid 90s created a space not only for the cessation, at least temporally, of ethnic conflict in the country but also to bring back the subjugated voices of working class, students and unemployed youth to the political theatre. This led to a record number of trade union actions, introduction of new labour legislation etc. In addition mounting pressure from the global competition, emerging foreign job opportunities for skilled workers in the industry etc. were compelling the industry to scrutinize its ways of managing labour. So the emergence or appearance of HRM is indeed induced by the 90s' socio-political reality in Sri Lanka and so in the apparel industry.

managing labour in the industry totally departed from the monarchic-type wage labour relationship that took place mainly under the banner of personnel management. Nor does it even imply the end of the dominance of the norms of the production floor (*viz.* 'scientifically driven' targets, compulsory overtime etc.) over managing labour in the industry. On the contrary, the 'changes' that took place in relation to managing labour in the industry were primarily 'official' and hence largely symbolic.

Thus for the industry 'the changes' meant, more or less, the replacement of the existing personnel or personnel management function by a new title – Human Resource or Human Resource Management – along with many other cosmetic insertions. As such the department/division of personnel management was re-titled the department/division of human resource management; the personnel manager/officer was replaced by a human resource manager/executive; the role of the welfare officer was overthrown by that of counsellor. [30] *De*politicised individual level counselling and grievance handling were encouraged as an alternative to collective bargaining. Equally direct surveillance and negative reinforcement on the factory floor, primarily in relation to production targets, were replaced by very competitive production incentive schemes and motivational packages which set one production line against others and hence one worker against others. Also policies, procedures and processes of managing labour were aligned with foreign buyers'

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[30] During the 1990s both ChillCo and HotCo renamed their personnel department the HR department along with the job titles of its people. For example, Gamini, the GM of ChillCo, began his job in HotCo as a 'personnel officer' before he moved to ChillCo in the mid 1980s. However, at present neither company has this job position. Instead they have a position called 'HR executive' which replaced the old job or title of 'personnel officer' in the 1990s. We can also see the other symbolic changes referred to in much of text at both companies as chapter 5 elucidates.

demand for 'ethical garments'.[31] The impression that the shopfloor worker is the most important asset in the industry was likewise sponsored through multiple internal and external communication/media channels (*viz.* employee handbooks, annual reports, company prospectuses, vision and mission statements, internal posters, job advertisements etc.) by identifying shopfloor workers as 'the target group' of HRM. The HR function of the industry was positioned 'against' the factory workfloor – its predominant norms of managing labour and its unbearable pressure on (female) shopfloor workers – as the 'saviour' of shopfloor workers, at least on the symbolic plane. Finally, managerial apparatuses of managing labour were (and are) set 'against' the collective consciousness of the workers, particularly shopfloor workers, of being 'estranged labour' (Marx 1959).

However, this new set of managerial apparatuses was in fact not aiming to change the existing policies, procedures and processes of managing labour in the industry and, consequently, how to eradicate the adverse living conditions and dishonourable socio-organizational status or identity of female shopfloor workers – the majority – in the industry (Devanarayana 1997; de Silva 2002; Lynch 2007). Rather they were as a whole deployed as a palatable as well as fashionable means to cope with the emerging realities in the 1990s (*viz.* industrial disputes, trade union actions, global competition and so forth) in general and labour market shortages, and to fulfil some of the foreign buyers' demand for 'ethical garments' in particular. Thus the emergence or appearance of HRM in the industry,

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[31] During this period some buyers started to impose different conditions on apparel manufacturing companies, particularly in relation to labour condition, mainly under the so-called ETI (Ethical Trade Initiative) (see for detail 'ETI Base Code', accessed 7 August 2009). As the GM in HotCo and ChillCo's MHR as well as some worker-feminist activists in the *Kalape* told me, these demands a change in managing labour in the companies and the wider industry.

I argue, was, on the one hand, *political*. It was, on the other hand, *epistemic*; a means of transforming the way in which objects of knowledge of managing labour are produced and reproduced (Spivak 2001: 58). Nevertheless these aims – political and epistemic – are not separable from one another (see Foucault 1981).

Thus the appearance or emergence of HRM in the industry was characterized by a noticeable 'gap' between the industry's expectations of the phenomenon of HRM – i.e., a means of coping, primarily with the external/contextual realities in the 1990s – and the epistemic community's (see footnote 25) – i.e., a prime means of transforming or 'radicalizing' the existing *episteme* of internal labour/employment management policies and processes with a view to inculcating *commitment* among workers. In fact the industry embraced HRM as a coping strategy to adapt to the 90s' socio-economic and socio-political reality whereas the epistemic community was appealing for 'real' changes in managing 'human resources'. Nevertheless these aims and expectations were/are neither separable from one another nor antagonistic. Instead they sustain the continued existence of (un)doing HRM in the industry. Further this 'gap' between the industry's and the epistemic community's expectations was also an outcome of and widened by the 'original' – Euro-American – temperament of HRM itself. This new set of managerial apparatuses was/is quite foreign to the industry as well as to Sri Lanka as it was/is largely based not only on normative ideals of HRM (Legge 1991; 2005) but also more crucially on Euro-American market managerial notions of managing employment (Gunawardana 1999). Moreover, due to the inherent gender bias or blindness of HRM (Woodall 1996; Dickens 1998), this new set of managerial apparatuses was/is ignorant about the multiple realities of female (shopfloor) labour in Sri Lanka and hence of the industry wherein, as we have seen, 80

percent of the workforce consists of 'traditionally unemployed' young women (Jayaweera 2000; 2002; de Silva 2002). Thus HRM in this context had to modify and indeed in part abandon its (imported/Euro-American) 'original' temperament and so its so-called key goals *viz.* high commitment, high quality, flexibility etc. (Guest 1987; 1990) which were articulated and endorsed by the epistemic community. And thus HRM created its own rupture at the very moment it appeared or emerged in Sri Lanka's apparel industry.

The rupture: un-doing HRM

The 'gap' between the epistemic community's expectation of HRM and the industry's and, consequently, the rupture that appeared at the very moment HRM emerged in the industry led to a split in managing labour in the industry into two distinct sets of managerial or control apparatuses. These apparatuses – I call 'doing' and 'undoing' HRM – are also not separable from each other. Rather they intermingle with and are dependent on each other. So, in the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry, doing HRM represents a set of generic policies, procedures and practices which are produced, reproduced and implemented chiefly in relation to the epistemic community's expectations. Doing HRM is thus moulded and aligned, more or less, in relations to theories, models, concepts, norms, codes of ethics and conduct etc. as produced, reproduced and promoted primarily by the agents of the epistemic community of HRM (see footnote 25). So doing HRM in the industry is largely based on the Euro-American market managerialist notions and discourses of managing labour (*viz.* commitment, flexibility, loyalty, quality, equality, efficiency, productivity, excellence, motivation, career path management, management development and so forth). It is embedded and embodied in textual HRM and hence primarily in 'official-*written'* texts of HRM such as employee handbooks, performance appraisal forms, training and

development manuals/videos, job advertisements, research articles, policy papers etc. (Harley and Hardy 2004) – the more explicit aspect or textual form of managing labour in the industry.

In the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry doing HRM is, therefore, the officially endorsed means of developing 'high commitment' or a 'highly committed workforce' and hence the officially endorsed means of inculcating commitment mainly among (female) shopfloor workers – the major apparatus of the labour-intensive assembly line and so the target group of HRM. It embraces the (a)political stance that problems or difficulties relating to labour relations and managing labour in the industry are primarily internal – institutional or industry-bound – and are due to '*mis*management'. So it sponsors the notion that eradicating mismanagement would bring 'emancipation' not only to owners and other stakeholders – 'external customers' – but also to 'internal customers', workers and indeed (female) shopfloor workers in apparel manufacturing companies. But due to its ideal and Euro-American character and hence inherent impotence to adapt to the prevailing context of the industry – its multiple contextual realities – doing HRM is not a self-reliant set of managerial policies and practices, even though it has been sponsored and endorsed by the epistemic community. Therefore, doing HRM always needs to take energy from more 'native' or 'local' discourses to strengthen its inherently feeble nature. Thus it always takes refuge in and intermingles with more local everyday procedures and practices of managing labour in the industry, which I call 'undoing' HRM.

Unlike doing HRM, undoing HRM is neither driven nor (openly) sponsored by the epistemic community. So it – its episteme – is not based on Euro-American market

managerialist discourses of managing labour. On the contrary, it is embedded and embodied in 'native' social discourses and indeed a variety of different native or local oral and written texts. These texts – which I call native or local texts of (undoing) HRM or of managing labour in the industry – are produced and reproduced, but mainly by actors in wider Sri Lankan society rather than the agents of the epistemic community as such. Nevertheless demarcating a line between these two groups is not simple and straightforward as they always intermingle and entwine with each other like the texts that they weave and interweave. It is even more difficult as some actors, ironically, possess 'dual membership'. These actors in fact represent a wide array of people and institutions who are interested in the industry and its happenings, directly or indirectly, more or less. So they largely comprise some of the internal players of the industry itself (*viz.* managers, supervisors etc. primarily on the shopfloor, canteen-keepers, security personnel, workers themselves, and more surprisingly HR personnel, disregarding their role in the industry as the 'official' agents of the epistemic community) as well as other social actors in the industry (*viz.* boarding house owners, shopkeepers/owners and the like). Some of the social actors in wider Sri Lankan society (*viz.* journalists, directors of films and teledramas, politicians etc.) are also part of this group due to their direct or indirect involvement with the industry and its everyday socio-economic affairs.

Thus the native or local texts of managing labour surpass the existing classification of texts of HRM – speeches, training videos, company and union reports, academic articles, collective agreements etc. (Harley and Hardy 2004: 380) – which are mainly woven and interwoven by the epistemic community and, consequently, are primarily in written form. Unlike textual HRM, these local texts do not focus on managing labour/employment as

such. Rather by interconnecting the subversive as well as subordinated and hidden facets and voices of the industry with its more vivid aspects and voices they manifest a wider picture of managing labour in the industry. They in fact deal with a variety of unrelated as well as related subjects, issues or narratives such as gender, love, sexuality, children, virginity, chastity, marriage, family life, happiness, loneliness, exploitation, discrimination, sexual harassment, working class emancipation and so on and so forth, rather than with the abstract constructs and methods of managing 'human resources'. Unlike textual HRM, local texts of managing labour in the context of the apparel industry are also more difficult to trace, because they are primarily in the oral form(s) – speeches and dialogues, yarns, inside jokes etc. – which are uttered in the industry and in its environs, mainly in the *kalape*. In the wider social context they are, however, largely in written form(s) – in the forms of teledramas, films, newspaper reports and feature articles, poems, *nisadas* (free verse), posters, leaflets etc. Despite their outer forms – oral, written or cyber – these local texts are primarily in Sinhala, the subordinates' and hence subordinated or 'subaltern' language in the industry.[32]

This nature of local texts in which undoing HRM is embedded and embodied explicitly as well as implicitly violates and interdicts the 'core norms' and 'values' of doing HRM, as depicted by the epistemic community. Thus local texts and hence undoing HRM are 'kept

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[32] Even though Sinhala is a national or official language in Sri Lanka which is used by more than 70 percent of the country's population, institutional affairs, particularly in the corporate sector of the country, are mainly conducted in English. This practice is also common in the apparel industry. As such, although managers in the industry use Sinhala for their everyday communication with subordinates, particularly shopfloor workers, the managerial language of the industry is English. Therefore, Sinhala is restricted to the language of subordinates. However, this doesn't mean that English is 'central' and Sinhala is 'marginal' in the everyday social milieu of the industry. Rather this relationship is a complex one as the central language – i.e., English – becomes the marginal language and vice versa (see Spivak 2001).

out' of the official recognition of the industry as well as of the epistemic community itself. So undoing HRM and its apparatuses remain the 'vulgar' aspect – i.e., lacking 'sophistication' and relating to and derived from 'ordinary' people rather than the epistemic community – of managing labour in the industry wherein doing HRM plays the 'ethical', 'official' and 'honourable' role. Thus undoing HRM is what individual and institutional actors in the industry are eager to hide. Therefore it remains as the more concealed aspect of managing labour in the industry. However, this doesn't mean that the HR functions, departments and hence the multiple actors in these functions/departments are not involved in or reluctant to undo HRM. Rather, knowing about and/or due to the inherent impotence of doing HRM, they often deploy the apparatuses of undoing HRM and so undo HRM when they deal with and manage labour, particularly female shopfloor labour in the industry. Undoing HRM in the industry, therefore, (dis)appears as part and parcel of doing HRM by intermingling with it. So it buttresses doing HRM and, consequently, is inseparable from it. This cohabitation between doing and undoing HRM and hence the intermingling of textual HRM with local texts not only strengthens doing HRM but also more importantly guarantees its survival in the industry.

Thus the language(s) of HRM – texts of HRM or textual HRM – in the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry, I argue, does not play the role of or nor appears as a 'sheer' rhetoric of HRM, as some critical researchers suggest us (see for example Legge 2001). Similarly undoing HRM is not the so-called reality of HRM. In fact if we attempt to discern the nature and disposition of HRM in the apparel industry in the light of rhetoric versus reality, we may falsely capture (doing) HRM in the industry as 'the rhetoric' of managing labour/employment (see Legge 1991; 2005; Dickens 1998; Truss et al. 1997). This is

because there are noticeable gaps not only between 'everyday practice' and textual HRM, particularly in official-written texts of HRM, but also, more interestingly, between English and Sinhala as well as oral and written versions of these texts. For example, in a job description (in English) in ChillCo we will encounter (in chapter 6), (female) shopfloor workers as 'team members' whereas the same team members are depicted as *lamai* in the texts woven at a Joint Consultative Committee (JCC)[33] meeting and the minutes of the meeting, which are in Sinhala.

Thus the contemporary appearance or disposition of HRM in the con-text of Sri Lanka's apparel industry not only violates, explicitly and implicitly, the abstract form of the epistemic community's version of managing employment while simultaneously being complicit with it. It may also upset our understanding of the phenomenon, particularly its linguistic categories – multiple signifiers – or language, as articulated in the critical scholarly tradition of HRM. In fact the linguistic categories or language(s) of HRM – writing or texts and indeed the written form of textual HRM (*viz.* employee handbooks, training and development manuals, performance appraisal forms etc.) – at least in the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry are not a 'source' of the representational crisis of HRM (see Keenoy 1997). It is not just a representation or means of representing the so-

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[33] Even though the 1978 Constitution of Sri Lanka accepts the right to form and join trade unions as a fundamental right of Sri Lankan citizens, this right was discouraged by the Greater Colombo Economic Commission Law No. 4 of 1978 which has been the major statutory arm of attracting foreign investors primarily to the FTZs since economic liberalization. As a remedy or substitute for unions, the Law proposes JCC where management and representatives of the workers can meet together to discuss matters relating to labour relations. However, unlike a unionized context, the bargaining power of the workers in this encounter has been restricted. Further the so-called representatives of the workers are more often the management's 'favourite workers'. Due to a long struggle of the workers in the FTZs, the trade unions and the leftwing political parties in Sri Lanka, nowadays unions *are* common in the zone, but the JCC still plays a crucial role in labour relations. Neither ChillCo nor HotCo's workers are unionized which the management of the companies are proud of.

called reality of HRM. Nor can it be visualised as the 'exterior' surface of the 'real practices' of employment management – the so-called reality of HRM – and, consequently, as its rhetoric (see Legge 2001). In other words it is not the sheer case that linguistic categories or languages of HRM conceal the exploitation of labour. Indeed writing, the written form of textual HRM, is no longer designating the exterior surface of (un)doing HRM in the industry (Derrida 1997:7).

On the contrary, this 'antagonism' and 'cohabitation' between doing and undoing HRM and hence textual HRM and local texts, I argue, not only embodies how the so-called 'rhetoric' of HRM intermingles and entwines with its 'reality' (see Kamoche 1995; Watson 1995a; 1995b) with a view to managing labour in Sri Lanka's apparel industry. It also determines the peculiar nature and disposition of HRM, its becoming, in industry. Indeed the phenomenon of HRM in Sri Lanka's apparel industry, as I suggest, appears as a 'web of texts' – a web in which official and local, written and oral texts, English and Sinhala texts bind together as threads in the process of (un)doing HRM. Therefore, "*There is nothing* [happening] *outside of the text …*" (Derrida 1997: 158; original emphasis).

HRM as a Web of Texts

This nature of HRM in the industry as a web of texts, however, does not mean that all referents are enclosed in the texts – textual HRM or local texts (Derrida 1988a; Caputo 2001). Nor does it imply that the truth or meaning(s) that is embedded and embodied in textual HRM and local texts and consequently in this textual web are interminable or indeterminable. Rather the (possibility of) meanings of multiple signifiers of textual HRM as well as of local texts are not arbitrary, although they are open. They are neither fully

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present nor fixed but always postponed or deferred (Derrida 1978; Jackson 2004). On the other hand, they are context-bound and hence embody the richness as well as constraints of the context within which the signifier or text appears, is uttered or disappears. I therefore argue that 'con-textualization' appears as a vital requisite as far as understanding the nature of HRM – as a web of texts – in Sri Lanka's apparel industry is concerned (see Watson 2004; Legge 2005). This does not mean that text is overshadowed by context, nor implies that we can split off context from text or vice versa. Rather context and text are inseparably tied together (Malpas 2002). Indeed as Çalişkan (2005: 64) points out "…the word "text" is embedded in the word "context", the text occupies a central position within it and becomes the center of attention. Thus, all discussions of context necessarily begin from the text [or vice versa]".

Articulating context *qua* text is neither a linguistic idealization of what is happening right now in the context – of Sri Lanka's apparel industry – nor a rejection of its materiality. On the contrary, it is a linguistic materialization of text/context (Jenkins 2000). Indeed, as Derrida (1988a: 137; emphasis mine) puts it, "…*the concept of text or of context … does not exclude the world, reality, history* [as many believe]". Therefore:

> …the concept of text…is limited neither to the graphic nor to the book, nor even to discourse, and even less to the semantic, representational, symbolic, ideal, or ideological sphere. What I call "text" implies all the structures called "real," "economic," "historical," socio-institutional, in short: all possible referents… [Therefore] "there is nothing outside the text". That does not mean that all the referents are suspended, denied or enclosed in a book…But it does mean that every referent, all reality has the structure of a differential trace… (Derrida 1988a: 148)

Text and indeed textual HRM as well as local texts in this sense cannot be regarded as mere vehicles that transmit meanings embedded either in context or in discourses. Nor can they be pinned down to discourses as such. On the contrary, textual HRM and local texts, I argue, manifest all possible referents – what is happening in the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry and hence its multiple realities. So, as Derrida (1988: 136) further recounts to us, "… "there is nothing outside the text" …means nothing else: there is nothing outside context". However, this does not mean a collapse of text into context or vice versa. Nor does it imply that "there is an in(de)finite contextualisation that would lead a free-for-all relativism, a kind of free base semiosis. On the contrary, *due to the very contexted character of any text or utterance*, meaning can only ever be specific and determined…" (Colebrook and McHoul 1996: 437-438; emphasis mine).

Thus context in this sense appears neither as a fixed landscape nor as an ahistorical, apolitical and astructural space which is empty. Rather I argue that it comes into our view as a socio-politically articulated and semiotically posited landscape within which multiple texts are woven, interwoven and read by many different social actors. It is a discursively articulated context – a sum of associative total of multiple texts which I call the 'nexus of the texts' (in Sri Lanka's apparel industry) – for which the text of (doing) the *lamai* identity refers to.

The nexus of the texts

Thus a text which is woven and interwoven in this landscape – i.e., the nexus of the texts – is not a collection of isolated utterances. Instead it intermingles, entwines and is connected with other texts. Thus the meaning or 'truth' embedded and embodied in this particular text

is not an isolated 'truth' which is unique to the text itself. It appears and exists in relation with the nexus of the texts. As a result a singular text that (explicitly) appears as a text of doing HRM or official text of HRM, I argue, always marks its own rupture, always tends to erase what it has already traced – as the reality or truth of managing employment/labour in the industry. Indeed it is always in a position to signify the possibility of undoing HRM – which is also true in a text that (explicitly) embodies and is embedded in *un*doing HRM. Nevertheless, the 'singularity' of the text remains unaltered. Thus the truth or meaning(s) embedded and embodied in a text is neither fixed nor unique. Nor can it be generalized. But it is always postponed or deferred, appears in relation with the nexus of the texts (Derrida 1978; Jackson 2004).

On the other hand, due to the intermingling of a particular text with other texts in the nexus – despite their (apparently) antagonistic and contradictory nature – it not only ruptures its own ethico-political aim or boundary (who writes for whom and for what) which distinguishes this text from the rest. It may also upset its place in the classification of 'textual HRM' and 'local texts'. For example, a same text (for example minutes of JCC meeting in ChillCo) might be featured or contaminated by doing and undoing HRM simultaneously. Therefore, a particular text of textual HRM (or of local texts) and the context or the nexus of the texts within which we read that text and so (re)produce its truth or reality (Barthes 1974) are inseparably tight together, despite the fact that the conditions of this context and so of the context itself are never absolutely determinable (Derrida 1988a).

Thus suffice it to say that this 'con-textualization' is the most vital prerequisite to capture and hence to theorize the nature and disposition of HRM – a web of texts – in Sri Lanka's apparel industry and, consequently, to comprehend what causes its nature and what it 'does' for and to female shopfloor workers – their very (non)existence as *lamai* in the con-text of the industry. However, this prerequisite, I argue, is not merely due to the entrenchment of the policies and practices of HRM in the apparel industry in its nascent liberalized context. Rather this is primarily due to the strange manner – as a web of texts in which doing and undoing HRM and hence textual HRM and local texts bind together – in which HRM emerged in this subaltern context. It is due to the very contextual character of (the possibility of) meanings that are embedded and embodied in textual HRM and local texts.

This nature of HRM as a web of texts, and its very con-textual character in the apparel industry, is, however, not straightforward, but rather subtle and concealed. So this nature of HRM in the industry, on the one hand, tends to disestablish and upset what (and how) we already 'know' and 'recognize' as 'HRM' – something good, fixed and something having a singular identity – according to the normative ideals or market managerialism of the West. On the other hand, it, consequently, might persuade us to capture doing HRM as something like rhetoric (see Legge 1991; 2005; Dickens 1998; Truss et al. 1999) in which reality appears as undoing HRM, the 'real' practice of managing (shopfloor) labour in the industry. But in the context of the apparel industry the demarcation between 'what HR policies and practices are' (as per the epistemic community) and 'what they are not' is a blur. So this nature of HRM in the industry, as we have already recognized, always upsets our attempts

to separate doing HRM from undoing HRM – indeed rhetoric of HRM from its so-called reality – or vice versa.

Rhetorics, realities and the in-between

In the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry, particularly on the factory floor, we can see – as we continue our *re*narrating journey of (doing) the *lamai* identity – very busy young women workers who are being 'plugged into' a systematically engineered production floor, although they are exhausted. We confront these workers as team members, sewing machine operators, helpers,[34] quality checkers and the like in employee handbooks or other official-written texts of HRM. But we can see 'the same' sewing machine operators, helpers, quality checkers etc. being referred to and represented as *lamai* on the factory floor. And we may come across the same *lamai* (or at least pictures of a selected few) on billboards, posters and the like exhibited in the apparel manufacturing companies – ChillCo and HotCo for example – and their surrounding environs under themes/titles like 'Our difference is our human resource…'. We also experience the ways in which the same 'human resources' emerge as *lamai* in the JCC meetings and we find the same *lamai* as mature and able employees in training workshops. Finally we notice the manner in which these mature and able employees become *babao* (baby), *daruwo* (children, daughters or sons) etc. in front of their managers.

Also we find abstract constructs such as commitment, flexibility etc. in employee handbooks and other official-written texts of HRM. We then confront different versions of

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[34] Shopfloor workers who help the sewing machine operators and others in similar jobs on the factory floor.

commitment and flexibility particularly on the factory floor. We also see the way in which abstract notions like loyalty come out in performance appraisal forms for example and we notice the subtext of 'the same' but 'different' loyalty appearing in wall-newspapers, for example in the cafeterias of ChillCo and HotCo as published by the workers. We also see carefully engineered policies and procedures of recruitment and selection etc. in textual HRM yet we recognize the manner in which 'the same' policies and procedures intermingle with somewhat peculiar and 'vulgar' procedures when recruiting and selecting. We may also recognize 'scientifically' articulated policies and procedures of counselling as in textual HRM. And we likewise experience the ways in which (female) shopfloor workers become *lamai* within and through 'the same' counselling sessions. Moreover, we see 'superwomen' who boost the export income of Sri Lanka in image building media initiatives about the shopfloor workers and we meet the same superwomen as garment[35] or *Juki kello* (*Juki* girls) if not *keli* (pieces) on their way to the boarding houses. Finally we notice the militancy of factory women in leaflets, pamphlets etc. articulated by the trade unions, worker-feminist activist groups (see footnote 40) and the like; but we recognize 'the same' militant factory women as *ahinsaka kello* (innocent girls) in political debates – and so on and so forth.

Thus what we confront as managing labour/employment and indeed (un)doing HRM in the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry is a set of (apparently) antagonistic policies, practices, moments or a series of events or processes that are embedded and embodied in

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[35] This colloquialism deriving from the English term, is also rendered phonetically in Sinhala to denote the garment industry (see for example Perera 2008: 26-27), as well as its (women) factory workers in the industry – their collective identity.

the multiple texts – textual HRM and local texts – which intermingle and entwine with each other. In this process(es) we see one (signifier) appears on behalf of the other; one meaning substitutes for another; one intermingles with the other; one interdicts its own as well as the other's (original) meaning and vice versa. Consequently, the sign(s) *supplements* the thing(s) itself – practice, reality, materiality or whatever we would like to label it. Indeed in this process, as Derrida (1982: 9; also see 1997) reminds us, "The sign is… put in the place of the thing itself… The sign represents the present in its absence. It takes the place of the present". Thus in this process the sign, the associative total of the signifier and signified (Barthes 2000), or a sum of signs, I argue, not only plays a vital role between the signifier(s) and the signified(s) – of textual HRM and local texts. It also takes the place of the reality or materiality of managing labour and its signification in the industry. Nevertheless the signified is always in a position to function as a signifier and vice versa (Derrida 1997; Barthes 2000). Therefore, I argue that this process what poststructuralists call 'dangerous supplement' (Derrida 1997) (dis)appears as the crucial as well as the inevitable process that determines the nature and disposition of HRM – its becoming – in the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry.

But this process is not as innocent as it looks. It is neither a mere change in connotation/metaphorical meanings as the signifier appears, is uttered, or disappears in different con-texts – for example, connotations of the signifier/term 'commitment' when it appears in an employee handbook, and when it is being uttered on the factory floor – nor even a mere substitution of one signifier for another and indeed one name/signifier for another, as in *lamai* to 'human resources' or vice versa, for example. Nor is it something that happened only in a particular historical context – either in the nascent liberalized

economic context or in the early 1990s in the apparel industry in Sri Lanka. Consequently, this process is not a 'thing' which repeats or utters the same thing. On the contrary, it is a process which adds as well as cumulates and accumulates presence. Indeed as Derrida puts it:

> The supplement adds itself, it is a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude, the *fullest measure* of presence. It cumulates and accumulates presence…
>
> But the supplement supplements. It adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates itself *in-the-place-of*; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void… the supplement is an adjunct, a subaltern instance which *takes-(the)-place*… [Therefore] The sign is always the supplement of the thing itself. (1997: 144-145; original emphasis)

Therefore, in this process meanings or messages which the signifiers of textual HRM, as coined by the epistemic community (and of local texts as coined by respective social actors), got to convey are not 'fixed', but plurivocal and relational. They are always subject to *substitute*, always awaiting their next supplement, their deferred presence (Derrida 1978; 1982; 1997; Jenkins 2000; Jackson 2004). Therefore, the signifiers of textual HRM, for example the term/signifier 'human resources', are not meaningful in and of themselves. Nor is the signifier(s) itself "…fixed, not free, with respect to the linguistic [epistemic] community that uses it" as Saussure (1970: 47) argues. Rather the signifier(s) – embodied in textual HRM and local texts – gets its meaning or gets to convey its 'message' relative to other signifiers in this textual web (Jenkins 2000). So the meanings exist in the *difference* between relational terms to which current representations defer (Clegg 1994: 151), and so they are always contaminated by the contextual character of the text itself (Colebrook and McHoul 1996; Malpas 2002). Indeed the other signifiers on which the term 'human

resources', for example, relies on are not necessarily the (other) signifiers of textual HRM,

because as we have already recognized textual HRM *per se* is not self reliant due to its

'official' – Euro-American – temperament in the context of the apparel industry. So as the

signifiers of textual HRM oscillate from one con-text to another – through and across

threads of the web of HRM (*viz.* recruitment and selection processes and practices,

induction programmes, performance appraisals, training and development programmes,

JCC meetings, counselling sessions, annual trips, visiting absent employees' boarding

houses, image building initiatives about shopfloor workers and so on) – they are largely

relying on or taking energy from the meanings that are embedded and embodied in local

texts (of undoing HRM). In this process, for example oscillating from the boardroom to the

factory floor in an apparel company, the term/signifier 'human resources' is thus

substituted by another signifier or a set of signifiers largely from local texts such as *lamai,*

daruwo (children, daughters or sons), *babao* (baby) *kello* (girls) and the like.

Therefore, the utterance of the term 'human resources' in the boardroom, for example, does

not necessarily signify the concept/signified (female) wage labour in the industry. Nor does

it embody shopfloor workers in the industry *per se*. Likewise the appearance of the term

'sewing machine operator' or 'team member' on a performance appraisal form in an

apparel manufacturing company – a written form/text of textual HRM – does not denote the

shopfloor worker or female wage labour in the industry as such. On the contrary, the terms

'human resources' or 'sewing machine operators', which are embodied in textual HRM, I

argue, also carry or signify subtle and subordinated meanings of the signifiers *lamai,*

daruwo (children, daughters or sons) and the like – their postponed or deferred presence –

that are chiefly embodied in local texts. Consequently, the utterance of the term *lamai* on

the factory floor or its (rare) appearance in the minutes of a JCC meeting in Sinhala does not signify the concept of 'children' alone. Rather it *supplements* the terms/signifiers 'sewing machine operators', 'human resources' etc. in these particular contexts. Indeed the term/signifier *lamai* no longer denotes either its connotative meanings (see *Gunasena Great Sinhala Dictionary* 2005), or its meanings in the wider Sri Lankan society, but utters its contextual, relational meaning.

How lamai formed: the lack of the signifier – of the signified

These tainted and contaminated meanings beyond the 'originals' as coined by the epistemic community of HRM or in wider Sri Lankan society, or this adding to or filling in of the 'lack' or 'emptiness' of the signifier as it oscillates from one context to another, is not due to any outside 'conspiracy'. Rather it is due to the very nature of the web of texts itself within which the sign(s) *supplements* the thing(s) itself (Derrida 1981; 1997). On the one hand, what we confront as signifiers, particularly of textual HRM, are virtually empty (Barthes 2000; also see Spivak 1985). On the other hand, more crucially, there is always a *lack* in the signifieds of local texts as well as of textual HRM (Derrida 1986). The sign then emerges as something full – a meaning – and thus is capable of filling this emptiness or this lack as the signifier/the signified oscillates from one con-text to another in the process of (un)doing HRM in the apparel industry (Barthes 2000). Indeed I argue that the 'real' intruder in this process is the *sign*. It is the thing which adds to replace, which fills the lack and, consequently, which takes the place of the thing itself. Therefore, as Derrida reminds us, "This substitution always has the form of the sign. The scandal is that the sign, the image, or the representer, become forces and make "the world move"" (1997: 147). So in the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry (as well as any other con-text) the sign, I argue,

takes the place of the 'thing' or of 'materiality' – female shopfloor workers' very (non)existence as *lamai* – in the industry and hence supplements it. So it is indicative of this very (non)existence of the workers as *lamai*. Thus this materiality of the workers can only be known as a relation within a discursive practice or field of (doing) the *lamai* identity because the meaning(s) of signifier(s) of textual HRM and local texts exist as a relation within that discursive field and so as part and parcel of the nexus of the texts in the industry (Walkerdine1989).

Thus we find the tainted and contaminated meanings of the signifiers/the signifieds of textual HRM as well as of local texts instead of their 'original' meanings or what they denote in the wider social context. For example, as we have already seen, the term/signifier *lamai* in the con-text of the apparel industry signifies neither (the concept of) children – its connotative meaning(s) or what it denotes in wider Sri Lankan society (see *Gunasena Great Sinhala Dictionary* 2005) – nor female wage labour in the industry as such. Nor does it necessarily signify the abstract concept of 'human resources', or those of 'sewing machine operators', 'helpers' etc. Rather it substitutes for the terms 'human resources', 'sewing machine operators', 'helpers' etc. and indeed signifies female shopfloor labour in the industry as a whole. However, the female *shopfloor* labour or workers who we confront in the everyday work milieus of the industry can never absolutely fit into the abstract concepts of 'female wage labour', 'human resources' or even the categories of 'sewing machine operators', 'quality checkers' and the like as in textual HRM. On the contrary, I argue that it is female wage labour (or human resources, or sewing machine operator and so on) which has been *childrenized* by many very problematic social forces and processes in the context of the apparel industry – within which the migrant young women become *lamai*

since their (unwelcome) arrival in the industry (see Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; Lynch 2002; 2007; Hewamanne 2003; 2008).

The term/signifier *lamai* in the con-text of Sri Lanka's apparel industry is thus the signification not of female wage labour as such, but of female wage labour that was/is *childrenized* in the apparel industry. This is because that there is the sign of 'childrenized female labour' (or human resources etc.) which is the associative total of the term/signifier *lamai* and the concept/signified female wage labour that intersects and connects the multiple meanings embodied in '*lamai*' (children) and '(female) wage labour' (or human resources etc.). So the signified female wage labour forms the sign – i.e. childrenized female labour – out of fusion with the signifier *lamai* (Walkerdine 1989). In fact the former and the latter – i.e., the concept/signified female wage labour and the term/signifier *lamai* – existed before uniting and forming this third object; the *childrenized* female labour that is the sign which is full and hence is meaningful in the con-text of the apparel industry (Barthes 2000). Indeed I would say that they – the term/signifier *lamai* and the concept/signified wage female labour – existed before the feminization of this localized global factory floor. Thus the utterance or (dis)appearance of the term/signifier *lamai* in different spatiotemporal arrangements in the industry necessarily denotes neither its denotative meaning nor its meanings in wider Sri Lankan society but its con-textual meaning: '(you) little ones'. This signification of *childrenized* female labour in Sri Lanka's apparel industry thus manifests its very con-textual character. Nevertheless the undecidability and becoming of the signifier *lamai* can never be suppressed and effaced as the signifier oscillates from one con-text to another in the process of (un)doing HRM in the industry.

But, as we have already recognized, this dangerous supplement is not merely due to the emptiness of the signifier (*lamai*) itself. Rather what we confront as the abstract constructs of (doing) HRM and indeed of the concepts/signifieds of textual HRM such as commitment, flexibility empowerment, quality, human resource development etc. are not full or fixed but rather allusive and elusive (Keenoy 1997; 1999; Legge 2005).[36] So this undecidability and becoming of the truth or meanings embedded and embodied in textual HRM and hence the 'tainted' and 'contaminated' meanings of multiple linguistic categories of HRM – beyond 'original' meanings coined by the epistemic community – are likewise partly due to this lack of the signified itself, for example the lack of the concept of 'flexibility' (see Woodall 1996; Dickens 1998) or of wage/productive female labour in the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry and indeed in the Global South (Spivak 1985). This lack is, therefore, always subject to addition, filling and indeed to supplementation as the signifieds of textual HRM (and of local texts) oscillate from one con-text to another in the process of (un)doing HRM. For example, the abstract concept/signified 'commitment', as we have seen in the literature review, is always in a position to be substituted (see Woodall 1996; Dickens 1998; Healy 1999; Legge 2005). This lack in this localized global factory floor, as I argue, is in the sense of the conscious or unconscious, deliberate or unintentional reluctance of the actors in the industry (including female shopfloor workers themselves) as well as in wider Sri Lankan society to accept the feminization of the factory floor and hence the rise of female wage labour in the apparel industry as something 'real'. Indeed this is a series of conscious and unconscious attempts at maintaining these proletarian women of the Global

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[36] It should be noted here that the signified, as we have already seen, always is capable of becoming a signifier and vice versa (see Derrida 1981; 1997). For example, the concept/signified 'human resources' also signifies wage workers in organizations. In this sense it is a signifier which signifies the workers.

South as 'good girls' of Sri Lankan modernity as Lynch (2007; see also 2002) puts it, or as *lamai*, little ones, as I argue.

The threads of the textual web

This process – dangerous supplement – in the context of the apparel industry, as we have seen, takes place within the web of texts itself which binds doing and undoing HRM together. As such it takes place through and across the threads of the textual web (*viz.* recruitment and selection processes and practices, counseling sessions, visiting absent workers' boarding houses, JCC meetings etc.) which intermingle and entwine with each other in the process of (un)doing HRM.[37]

As we have already seen the term/signifier 'human resources', for example, substitutes for the term *lamai* and vice versa as the signifier oscillates from one con-text to another. In the

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[37] Recruitment and selection is a good example that exhibits the intermingling of doing and undoing HRM. In the context of the apparel industry, recruitment and selection always violates its rather abstract and ideal forms in textual HRM as coined by the epistemic community. So it is a hybrid effect of doing and undoing HRM in relation to attracting and selecting workers for the industry. As evident in the industry, in this process, representatives of human resource departments of the apparel manufacturing companies more often go to the remote rural areas of the country to recruit shopfloor workers. Here they get support from 'respectable' persons or community leaders, particularly from regional political leaders in the governing party, in these areas. With the support of these regional actors, the representatives of HR departments circulate a lot of publicity for the recruitment event through many modes of communication such as posters, banners, loudspeakers etc. weeks ahead of the selection interviews. The events take place mainly in community centres such as welfare centres, temples etc. After selecting new workers, in most cases the representatives of HR departments arrange free transport for the workers for their very first journey to the company. One of the interesting aspects of this process is that the regional political leaders who are involved in the process use the event as a fulfilment of their election promises – providing job opportunities for unemployed youth in their regions. This unique recruitment and selection process, as I have encountered it in ChillCo and HotCo, is not the ideal type recruitment and selection as in textual HRM in the industry. Nor is it what HR people, agents of the epistemic community, in the industry are pleased to disclose and endorse. Nevertheless it is not entirely different from the recruitment process in textual HRM. Instead the process which is induced by the contextual constraints of the industry, its shrinking labour market, connects undoing characteristics of recruitment (e.g. recruiting via politicians) with its doing characteristics (e.g. do not ask for sexual orientation of the applicants at the interview to comply with demands for 'ethical garments'), which guarantee the 'ethical face' of the process.

context of the apparel industry this term – human resources – is a signifier embodied in textual HRM, particularly in its written form and so official-written texts (e.g. training manuals). The term/signifier *lamai,* which is primarily in oral form, on the contrary, is a signifier embodied, largely if not wholly, in local texts. However, when the signifiers oscillate from one con-text to another in the process of (un)doing HRM, one substitutes for the other and vice versa. And this substitution is not arbitrary and innocent. Rather in this process these texts are fulfilling their 'own desires' and thus attempting to overcome their inherent 'disabilities' and 'impotencies'. So textual HRM entwines with or depends on local texts so as to overcome the inherent 'impotence' of doing HRM which it represents. Local texts, on the contrary, intermingle with textual HRM to get legitimacy for the 'vulgar' managerial apparatuses of undoing HRM which it embodies. Thus in this process textual HRM and local texts are fulfilled by what they inherently lack. So textual HRM overcomes its inherent impotence by entwining with the meanings that are embedded and embodied in local texts. And local texts endorse their legitimacy by intermingling with textual HRM.

Nonetheless in this process, although textual/doing HRM layer appears as the inherently feeble means or form of HRM in the industry, it still manages to perform or usurp the main role. This is twofold. On the one hand, undoing HRM/local texts has *not* been endorsed either by the epistemic community or by the industry itself. So it is what the industry as well as the epistemic community is eager to hide. It is in fact untraceable, although it (dis)appears in different spatiotemporal arrangements in the industry; untraceable in the sense that its (dis)appearance is ephemeral and instantaneous. It 'goes without a trace' since the textual form of undoing HRM – local texts in which undoing HRM is embedded and

embodied – is primarily oral and is indeed a series of texts-in-time in the organizational milieu.

On the other hand, textual/doing HRM consists of officially endorsed texts which are mainly in a written form such as employee handbooks, performance evaluation forms etc. As such it is not only the legitimate if not legitimated textual form but also the traceable form of HRM. In fact the utterance of the terms *lamai*, *daruwo* (children, daughters or sons) etc. which are chiefly embodied in local texts are intimately bound to textual HRM with a view to endorsing their legitimacy or even innocence. And indeed they are intimately bound to their written and hence traceable images and replicas such as the terms/signifiers 'human resources', 'team members', 'sewing machine operators' and the like in textual HRM, its official-written texts, similarly to what Saussure recounts to us: "…the written word is so intimately connected with the spoken word it represents that it manages to *usurp* the principal role" (1995: 25; emphasis mine). Thus textual HRM, its writing – the chief form of textual HRM – is neither a mere symbol(s) nor a modality that substitutes for and legitimizes oral/local texts of undoing HRM and so the 'vulgar' nature of undoing HRM. Indeed it is not sheer exterior surface of (un)doing HRM in the industry. Rather it, official-*written* texts of HRM, comprehends the language(s) or texts of (un)doing HRM in the industry (Derrida 1997). Indeed this intermingling if not this role of official-written texts of HRM echoes what Legge (2001) tells us about the way in which the language of HRM, textual HRM, conceals labour exploitation in capitalist work organizations, nevertheless it cannot be pinned down to 'sheer' rhetoric of HRM. I would say it conceals if not legitimizes a 'double exploitation'; the *childrenization* of female wage labour in the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry. This double exploitation is both

capitalist exploitation as Marx taught us, and the subordination and marginalization of female wage labour in capitalist, indeed gendered organizations as the feminist critics recount to us.

Thus in this process of (un)doing HRM we confront the ways in which one signifier supplements another signifier: one signifier becomes the signifier of the other signifier and vice versa and hence becomes 'the signifier of signifiers' (for example, the term/signifier *lamai* as the signifier of the terms/signifiers 'human resources', 'sewing machine operators', 'team members' and the like). Also we confront the manner in which a signified, for example the concept of female wage labour (in the apparel industry), can have several signifiers such as *lamai*, garment or *Juki kello* (girls)*, daruwo* (children, daughters or sons), human resources etc. (Barthes 2000). Further we come across the ways in which a signified functions as a signifier; for example, the concept/signified *lamai* (children or little ones) as the signifier of the concept/signified female wage labour. Therefore, there is no logical guarantee that meanings of the signifiers of textual HRM or of the local texts denote the same meanings coined by the epistemic community or by wider Sri Lankan society when they appear in a particular con-text, or utter the same meaning when they oscillate from one con-text to another (Jenkins 2000). What the signifiers signify or convey are in fact neither the 'original' meanings or messages of the epistemic community as such, nor the mere connotative meanings of the signifiers nor even their meanings in wider Sri Lankan society. Rather the meaning, as we have already seen, appears and exists in relation with the nexus of the texts itself and hence can only be grasped within the con-text in which the signifier (or the signified) appears, is uttered or disappears.

In this context, suffice it to say that what we confront as HRM in the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry is not a fixed nor single managerial discipline in its own right. Nor does it embody a self-reliant set of managerial apparatuses. Rather it comes to our view as a web of texts in which the multiple texts – textual HRM and local texts – intermingle and entwine with each other in the process of (un)doing HRM in the industry. It is in fact a flux of momentary appearing and disappearing; intermingling and entwining (of the possibility of) meanings of textual HRM and local texts, what the Buddha describes as "…just like a mountain river, flowing far and swift, taking everything along with it…" (Rahula 1972: 25) under the banner of or in the name of HRM. Therefore, there is no such thing as fixed HRM. Consequently, there are no fixed (meanings of) linguistic categories – fixed signifiers of textual HRM. Indeed there is no room to detach the so-called rhetoric of HRM from its reality (see Kamoche 1995; Watson 1995a; 1995b; Janessens and Steyaert 2009). Everything which appears in the name of or which hides or disappears under the name of HRM is in process – supplementation. Therefore I argue that we can no longer restrict the language or linguistic categories of HRM (what I call textual HRM) either to so-called rhetoric as such or to a mere 'source' of the representational crisis of the phenomenon. Rather, as we have recognized, these categories are meaningful and hence (re)construct their (our) own reality – the multiple realities of managing labour in Sri Lanka's apparel industry – in the process of (un)doing HRM by entwining with local texts. Indeed linguistic categories or (the multiple signifiers of) textual HRM manage to usurp the main role at the moments when doing and undoing HRM intermingle and entwine with each other through the threads of the textual web itself.

Thus as well as critical scholars of HRM we recognize that the nature and disposition of HRM in the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry *is* in process (Keenoy 1999; Steyaert and Janessens 1999). This becoming of the phenomenon of HRM in the industry is, however, neither because our inability to coin words with which 'control' its identity nor due to the absence of "… linguistic categories which are sufficiently 'robust to fix' HRM…", as Keenoy (1999: 7) suggests. Nor is it due to the differences in the theoretical positions of those who produce and reproduce HRM as such (Legge 2001). Nor is it merely due to change in the way in which we look at the phenomenon of HRM (Keenoy 1999). On the contrary this is, I argue, primarily due to the 'inherent' nature – i.e., the rupture of HRM that appeared at the very moment HRM emerged in the appeal industry – of HRM, and so the internal dynamics of HRM itself – the ways in which textual HRM and local texts intermingle and entwine with each other in the process of (un)doing HRM. It is indeed due to the very con-textual character of the phenomenon of HRM itself – as a 'web of texts'.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I discuss the ways in which I capture and theorize managing labour and so the nature and disposition of the phenomenon of HRM in the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry. Drawing empirical evidence from the industry and based on my experiences in my fieldwork I argue that HRM created its 'own' rupture at the very moment it emerged or appeared in the industry as part and parcel of the 90s' socio-economic reality of Sri Lanka. Then I show how this rupture led to two sets of apparatuses of managing labour – which I call doing and undoing HRM. Inspired by poststructuralist notions of language and also reflecting academic literature on HRM I illustrate how doing and undoing HRM and so textual HRM and local texts intermingle and entwine with each other in the process of

(un)doing HRM in the industry. Here I show how this nature of HRM in the industry upsets our attempt to separate doing HRM from undoing HRM and indeed rhetoric of HRM from its so-called reality or vice versa. In this context I conclude that HRM in the industry can be captured or conceptualized as a 'web of texts'. I therefore argue that capturing or conceptualizing the nature and disposition of HRM in the industry is a vital prerequisite to explore and dissect the role HRM, mainly its language(s) or texts, in the process of the formation and construction of female shopfloor workers' collective identity in the industry. Consistent with this 'conceptualization' of the phenomenon of HRM in the industry, now I move to discuss the methodology of the thesis.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology
The landscape of (un)doing *lamai* and PDA

Introduction

As we have recognized, (doing) the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers in Sri Lanka's apparel industry is embodied and embedded in a variety of different texts. These texts are woven and interwoven by many different actors in the industry as well as in wider Sri Lankan society. Addressing to this nature of (doing) the *lamai* identity, in this chapter I discuss the methodology of the thesis in two parts. In part one I discuss the ways in which I have conducted the fieldwork for the thesis. Here first I explain the rationale for choosing different research sites and phases of the fieldwork. Second I describe the nature of the data I have gathered and generated in these research sites. Then I explain my data gathering and generating methods. Finally I discuss the constraints and challenges which I confronted in the field along with my reflections on the fieldwork.

In so doing I move to the analytical methods (part two here) and so discuss the ways in which I analyse my data which I gathered and generated during the fieldwork. In this discussion, first I explain the rationale for choosing poststructuralist discourse analysis (PDA) over other analytical possibilities. Then I explain the nature of PDA which I employ in the thesis. Next I outline the ways in which I analyse my data. Indeed I explain how I *re*narrate (doing) the *lamai* identity as embedded and embodied in a variety of different oral and written texts which I call 'texts of the *lamai* identity' by bracketing heterogeneous

nature of these texts for a moment. Here I illustrate how I arrange this renarration journey of (doing) the *lamai* identity through three interconnected phases – three data analysis chapters (4-6). In my concluding remarks I argue that during this renarration journey we need to pay equal attention to actors in ChillCo and HotCo, in the *kalape*, as well as in wider Sri Lankan society as they are all involved, more or less, in (un)doing the workers' collective identity as *lamai* in the industry.

Part One

Fieldwork

Fieldwork: An Overview

The landscape of this thesis is Sri Lanka's apparel industry. The fieldwork was carried out in the industry in Sri Lanka between April and September 2007. I located the fieldwork mainly in two apparel manufacturing companies, namely ChillCo and HotCo. ChillCo is situated in a small village thirty kilometres from Colombo. HotCo is in the Katunayake FTZ. As a result of the negotiations of one of my close friends I gained access to ChillCo and ChillCo's General Manager then helped me access to HotCo. The purpose of selecting companies situated both in the zone and outside it is to explore similarities, differences and deviations in the ways in which the *lamai* identity is done, narrated and undone, since the nature of everyday affairs and the existence of female shopfloor workers in these social domains differ, more or less, from one other (see Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; Attanapola 2005; Lynch 2007; Hewamanne 2008).

The fieldwork was, however, not restricted to ChillCo and HotCo. This is for primarily two reasons. Since the *lamai* identity is a discursively articulated identity it is vital to explore other social actors' (beyond the actors in ChillCo and HotCo) involvement in (un)doing the identity with view to understanding its heterogeneous and shifting nature. On the other hand, due to the diversity among social actors who are involved in doing and undoing the identity, particularly in the Katunayake FTZ (see Hewamanne 2003; 2008; Attanapola 2005), it is important to know how actors in the industry – in ChillCo and HotCo – and other social actors in wider Sri Lankan society intermingle and entwine with each other in the formation of female shopfloor workers' collective identity in the industry. Thus after my fieldwork in ChillCo and subsequently in HotCo I (dis)engaged with social actors such as owners of boarding houses where female workers lodge and the like in the *kalape* who both affect and are affected by discursive formations – indeed of the *lamai* identity – within the industry.

The fieldwork for the thesis was carried out in four phases. In the first phase of the fieldwork, from April to June 2007, I engaged (and disengaged) with ChillCo and its actors. This was mainly to gather and generate oral and written texts that are embodied and embedded in (un)doing the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers in the company. Here I conducted semi-structured and unstructured interviews with various actors – managers (*viz.* the General Manager, Human Resource Manager, and Operations Manager) and non-managerial workers (*viz.* the Counsellor, one Production Assistant, two supervisors, and three shopfloor workers) – in the company. These interviews were also followed by observation sessions on the factory floor, in ChillCo's cafeteria and in a JCC meeting. During my (dis)engagement with ChillCo and its actors I also gathered different

written texts – secondary data – that embody the HR policies, procedures and practices of ChillCo and provide background information about the company.

In the second phase of the fieldwork, from July to August 2007, I moved to HotCo in the Katunayake FTZ. As at ChillCo here I conducted semi-structured and unstructured interviews with selected managers including an executive [38] (*viz.* the General Manager, Human Resource Manager, Assistant Human Resource Manager, Factory Manager, Floor Manager, and an HR Executive) and two shopfloor workers in the company. [39] These interviews were followed by observation sessions on the factory floor, in HotCo's cafeteria and in a rather casual JCC meeting. During my (dis)engagement with HotCo and its actors I was also able to participate in one of the company's regular visits to absent (shopfloor) employees' boarding houses. This was not a pre-planned activity when I was developing my schedules for the fieldwork. Further, as at ChillCo, during my fieldwork in HotCo I also gathered different written texts that contain the HR policies, procedures and practices of the company and provide its background information.

After 'concluding' my fieldwork activities in ChillCo and subsequently in HotCo I (dis)engaged with a few social actors in the *kalape*. Here I conducted unstructured interviews with one boarding house owner (along with his wife), a matron in a girls'

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[38] In HotCo as well as ChillCo the job title 'executive' (*viz.* HR executive, production executive and the like) represents actors who perform *junior* managerial roles in the companies.
[39] Due to time and spatial constraints on the factory floor HotCo allowed me to interview its shopfloor workers, not on the factory premises but in the company's 'girls' hostel'. However, I declined this offer since I experienced somewhat rigid surveillance and 'code of conduct' at the hostel when I visited (I discuss these aspects in chapter 6). So the interviews with these two workers were actually conducted in their boarding house after my fieldwork in HotCo.

hostel,[40] one small shop owner, and three worker-feminist activists[41] in the *kalape*. During this phase I gathered some secondary data such as *nisadas* (free verse), poems, leaflets and the like woven by the workers as well as worker-feminist activists in the *kalape*. Also I took some photographs of posters, job advertisements etc. by wandering around the *kalap*e, particularly in the Avariayawatta[42] vicinity – its bazaar, temples, playgrounds, bus stations and so forth.

In the final phase of the fieldwork I searched the National Library in Sri Lanka[43] to gather some secondary data – written texts that embody (doing) the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers in the industry, especially in its nascent liberalized economic context, in the late 1970s and mid 1980s – which were articulated by social actors such as politicians, journalists and the like. During this phase I also gathered cinematic texts. The prime purpose of gathering and generating these secondary data was to synthesise a 'genealogical note' of (doing) the *lamai* identity as part and parcel of what I call 'nexus of the texts' (see chapter 2) in Sri Lanka's apparel industry.

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[40] This unstructured interview was conducted during my fieldwork in HotCo. However, due to the nature of the role of this matron I categorize this encounter alongside other social actors in the industry (again I discuss these aspects in chapter 6).

[41] Activists in the *kalape* with whom I engaged in this phase of the fieldwork are not members of Sri Lanka's traditional trade unions. However, they are actively involved in industrial relations and labour matters in the industry and the zone as negotiators, as legal advisers for terminated employees in labour tribunals and the like. In addition most of these activists and the non-government organizations (NGOs) that they represent are interested and involved in women's issues and worker's fundamental rights. Due to this diversified nature of their role in the *kalape* I call them 'worker-feminist' activists rather than calling them worker activists or feminist activists.

[42] Avariayawatta is the nearest town to the Katunayake FTZ. The majority of the zone's workers lodge in the town area and its bazaar provides for their daily needs. Job advisements, events, campaigns etc. about and relating to the zone and its workers are thus very common in the area.

[43] My initial plan was to search the National Archive in Sri Lanka. But since I found a more sophisticated and methodically ordered data source in the National Library I moved there rather than searching the archive.

Data

For analytical simplicity data in this thesis is divided into three categories: (1) background information about ChillCo and HotCo; (2) data about managing employment in ChillCo and HotCo; and (3) 'texts of the *lamai* identity' – oral and written texts that are embodied and embedded in the (un/doing) *lamai* identity in the industry. The texts of the *lamai* identity is divided into two, official texts of (doing) HRM and 'local' texts of (undoing) HRM. However, it should be noted that this 'classification' is not an attempt to establish rigid boundaries among these data sources. Rather it is provided simplicity to make this chapter and so the thesis readable.

Background information

The purpose of gathering background information about ChillCo and HotCo was to comprehend and synthesize the context within which the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers is done, narrated, restored and undone – as part and parcel of managing employment/labour – in the companies. So data that describe the establishment and evolution of the companies and their organizational structures/charts, vision and mission, their products and buyers, the nature of their manufacturing processes etc. are considered as background information. Although I originally planned to gather multiple (official) written documents – secondary data – such as annual reports, mission statements, company prospectuses and the like these documents were either unavailable or the managers were quite reluctant to disclose them to me during my fieldwork in the companies. Thus to accomplish this purpose I had to largely depend on my semi-structured interviews with the managers, especially with the General Manager of ChillCo and of HotCo, and the official website of the companies. Nevertheless I was able to gather some documents such as

internal news bulletins, employee handbook[44] etc. that comprise information about the nature, background and historical evolution of the companies.

Data about employment management

The prime purpose of gathering and generating data about managing employment in ChillCo and HotCo was to understand multiple means or apparatuses of managing employment/labour, particularly (female) shopfloor labour, in the companies, and how these apparatuses intermingle and entwine with each other in the process of (un)doing the workers' collective identity as *lamai* in these work milieus. To accomplish this purpose, as for the background information, I had a somewhat ambitious plan to collect both oral (primary) and written (secondary) data or texts. However, when I began my fieldwork activities in the companies I realized that some of the processes and procedures of managing employment were either not documented as separate processes or procedures, (e.g. disciplinary procedures), or not practiced in the companies (e.g. training needs analysis for shopfloor workers). As a result I had to give up this initial plan to some extent. Nevertheless I managed to gather and generate some important official-written documents – secondary data – such as the employee handbooks, job applications, documents that contain demographic data (*viz.* gender, age etc.) about the employees, minutes of JCC meetings and the like. To fulfil the gap between what I intended and realized I again had to depend on managers', especially Human Resource Managers', versions of managing

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[44] This tiny booklet (in Sinhala) which is given to a newly recruited shopfloor worker contains a lot of important information about the company and a worker's duties and responsibilities, safety regulations, leave entitlement etc.

employment/labour in the companies during my interviews with them. I treat this 'undocumented' information as primary data in this regard.

Texts of the *lamai* identity

As I have already suggested texts in this thesis play a vital role as far as *re*narrating (doing) the *lamai* identity is concerned. Despite the fact that data about the background and employment management of ChillCo and HotCo are also in textual form(s), in this thesis texts that are embedded and embodied in the *lamai* identity – texts of the *lamai* identity – are treated as a separate 'analytical regime'. So the term *text* is used in its broader sense. On the one hand, it encloses and embodies 'written' texts such as job advertisements, newspaper articles, teledramas, photos etc. as well as oral/spoken texts such as transcripts of (spoken) interviews and conversations and the like (Fairclough 2003). Nevertheless, despite this heterogeneity – which I bracket, in this thesis, under the collective signature of 'text' itself – here text, on the other hand, means not merely book, graphic, film, transcript of (spoken) interview or any other (textual) form. Instead it implies *all possible referents* (Derrida 1988a; Caputo 2001). Text in this thesis is indeed treated as a *polysemic space* where the paths of several possible meanings intersect and intermingle with each other (Barthes 1981: 37). In this sense the purpose of gathering and generating the texts of the *lamai* identity is not only to explore, dissect and indeed *re*narrate (doing) the *lamai* identity but also to dissect what (texts of) HRM in the industry 'really' does in this process of (un)doing female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai*. For this I divide the texts of the *lamai* identity into two, 'official' texts of (doing) HRM and 'native' or 'local' texts of (undoing) HRM.

Official texts of (doing) HRM

Here I argue that official texts of HRM or what I call 'textual HRM' (see chapter 2) play a vital role in doing *lamai* identity at ChillCo and HotCo and indeed in the wider industry. They include written texts such as job advertisements, performance appraisal forms, training manuals, employee handbooks, minutes of JCC meetings etc. – some of which I have also mentioned under data about managing employment in these companies – and oral texts which emerged or were woven during or in relation to managing labour in the companies during my fieldwork activities in these work milieus. However, as I encountered in both ChillCo and HotCo, official-written texts that embody the term/identity *lamai* are very rare in these companies and in the wider industry. Nevertheless, official-*written* texts (of the *lamai* identity) which are woven and interwoven by actors in apparel manufacturing companies *are* evident in the industry, particularly in its nascent liberalized context (e.g. *Dinamina* 1979a; *Dinamina,* 1979b; *Dinamina* 1979c) and also when the text is in Sinhala, for example minutes of the JCC meeting in ChillCo.

This lacuna does not mean that doing *lamai* identity is not part of managing employment in ChillCo and HotCo and indeed of texts of (doing) HRM in these companies and the wider industry in general. Rather texts of (doing) HRM that are embodied and embedded in (doing) the *lamai* identity in these work milieus, as I encountered them, were primarily in oral form. These oral texts were woven and interwoven not only by managers but also by non-managerial workers in ChillCo and HotCo. So they emerged in my informal dialogues/conversations as well as during formal interviews with these actors – primary data about (un/doing) the *lamai* identity – during my fieldwork activities. And they embody the ways in which the term *lamai* (along with other residual/relational terms/identities such

as team members etc.) was being used – and so the *lamai* identity was being (un)done – by these actors as part and parcel of managing (female shopfloor) labour in the different socio-spatial arrangements of the companies.

Local texts of (undoing) HRM

As I argue in this thesis, social texts (*viz.* news reportage, films, poems, everyday utterances etc.) in the industry and wider Sri Lankan society play a vital role in (un)doing female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* and hence managing them in the work milieu. These texts, as we have seen in chapter 2, are woven and interwoven not only by other social actors such as politicians, teledrama and film directors, journalists, worker-feminist activists in the *kalape* and the like but also by managers and non-managerial workers in the industry. These texts are, although largely in oral form such as (transcripts of) informal dialogue/conversations in the work milieu – ChillCo and HotCo – they are in many written forms (*viz.* news reportage, poems, teledramas etc.) in the wider social context. Bracketing this heterogeneous nature for a moment, in this thesis, I call them native or local texts of (undoing) HRM. Unlike official texts diversity and quantity of these texts are immense. Thus I have selected only a few texts as exemplars – not only to understand the ways in which they intermingle and entwine with each other and with the official texts of (doing) HRM in the process of managing (female) labour but also to dissect the role of the weavers of these texts in the process of (un)doing the *lamai* identity in the industry. In my selection of local texts, I have also taken into consideration the diversity of these texts and their weavers in wider Sri Lankan society as well as in the industry. Indeed they include:

- Excerpts from (the transcripts of) my informal dialogues and formal interviews, particularly unstructured interviews, with managers and non-managerial workers in ChillCo and HotCo and with boarding house owners, worker-feminist activists etc. in the *kalape*.

- Selected feature articles and news reportage about the apparel industry and/or the Katunayake FTZ published in Sinhala and English newspapers in Sri Lanka (from 1979 to 2007).

- Selected poems, *nisadas* (free verse) and stories which were woven and/or published either by the shopfloor workers themselves or by worker-feminist activists in the *kalape*.

- A teledrama – *Grahanaya* ('Magnetism'/'Eclipse' 2005) – in which the central theme or characters are the female workers in the industry.

- Two films – *Sulang Kirilli* ('The Wind Bird' 2002) and *Kinihiriya Mal* ('Fireflies' 2000) – in which the major characters are female workers in the apparel manufacturing companies in the Katunayake FTZ.

Methods of Data Gathering and Generation

Semi-structured and unstructured interviews and observation are the main methods of data gathering and generation. Also I used the library database in the National Library in Sri Lanka to gather some secondary data – written texts that are woven by the social actors such as politicians, journalists and the like – about (un)doing the *lamai* identity, apparel industry etc. In addition I gathered if not bought cinematic texts – DVDs of the two films and the teledrama – from a DVD vendor in Colombo.

Semi-structured interviews

The main purpose of conducting semi-structured interviews was to gather background information about ChillCo and HotCo, and some preliminary data about employment management in the companies. So through these interviews I attempted to create some sort of initial picture about the companies and managing employment/labour, particularly female shopfloor labour, in these work milieus. Rationale of choosing semi-structured interview method is twofold. Since I had fairly specific topics to cover in the interview sessions the semi-structured interview method was selected as the most appropriate interviewing method to gather and generate this information (Fontana and Frey 2000; Mason 2002; Bryman and Bell 2007). It was also induced by my ontological and epistemological position and assumptions since I view that participants' knowledge, understandings etc. vis-à-vis questions I raised are meaningful properties of the social reality which I attempt to explore, understand and (re)construct through *interacting* with them (Mason 2002; 63-67).

During the interviews I raised questions under the specific topics vis-à-vis these information while offering the participants a great deal of leeway in how to respond. This was to encourage the participants to explain their views about the questions which I raised or give them opportunity for (re)construction of 'contextual knowledge' by focusing on these questions (Mason 2002). Also I situationally 'interfered' by raising some follow up questions so as to further comprehend the participants' views (Bryman and Bell 2007). Thus, despite the specific areas which I covered in the interviews, these evolved in a rather informal way as part and parcel of the supportive atmosphere of the companies and, more importantly, of many of the participants' enthusiasm about the interviews.

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The General Manager and Human Resource Managers of ChillCo and HotCo, ChillCo's Operation Manager, and Factory Manager of HotCo were the key participants in the semi-structured interviews. My encounter with an HR executive in HotCo also evolved as a semi-structured interview since I focused on preliminary information about the company, particularly its HR policies and practices, in this encounter.

Interviewing the General Managers

ChillCo and HotCo are both headed by a General Manager (GM) under a common director appointed by the Group. So, as is customary, I began my fieldwork activities with semi-unstructured interview sessions with the GMs of the companies. The purpose of interviewing respective GMs was two fold; to create the preliminary step or bridge in my fieldwork in his company. This, as I expected, not only helped me to conduct the fieldwork in the company with fewer (managerial) disturbances. It also emerged as a bridge to move to other managerial and non-managerial actors in the companies without much trouble. This was, on the other hand, to gather background information about the company with a view to creating a general picture of the company as an initial step of my fieldwork activities in this research setting.

Semi-structured interviews with the GMs were primarily conducted under the themes of evolution of the companies, nature of their organizational structure, their vision, mission and objectives, current financial and market viability and trends, products and buyers and the like. Nevertheless, other areas of the companies and their actors, for example what the GMs think about their companies and the industry in general, their views about managing

employment, particularly female shopfloor workers etc. also emerged as these encounters unfolded.

These interviews were conducted in English. This is the official if not preferred language, particularly of senior managers in Sri Lanka's corporate sector, mainly when they communicate with outside parties such as buyers, suppliers and the like. Both the interviews lasted more than one hour. They were digitally recorded as both the GMs agreed to this.

Interviewing Human Resource Managers

After my encounters with the GMs, I conducted semi-structured interviews with Human Resource Managers (MHRs) in both companies. [45] The MHRs performed a middle managerial role under the GM. They were the head of the HR department and thus responsible for every aspect of managing employment in the companies – from recruitment to appraisal to training and development to layoff. However, unlike human resource managers in the 'traditional' manufacturing sector in Sri Lanka, the MHR's role in the apparel industry is somewhat unorthodox and more demanding. They are generally under the pressure of tight work schedules of the factory and thus required to recruit new shopfloor workers on a daily basis to cope with relatively high labour turnover. They are, as I have experienced, also required to address and cope with many different demands and grievances of a diverse workforce of which the majority is unmarried, migrant young

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[45] Although I was able to conduct a semi-structured and then an unstructured interview with the MHR in ChillCo, my encounter with HotCo's MHR was limited to one interview which took more than an hour. At the beginning this encounter took the form of a semi-structured interview as I raised some specific questions. Then it unfolded in a rather unstructured manner as I encouraged the manager to narrate his version of managing labour, particularly female shopfloor labour, at HotCo.

women who are living in a relatively adverse socio-economic context, particularly in the Katunayake FTZ (see Devanarayana 1997; de Silva 2002; Attanapola 2005).

The purpose of my semi-structured interviews with the MHRs was to gather and generate preliminary information about managing labour and to familiarize myself with the nature and the role of the HR department, 'official' HR policies, procedures and practices of the company (*viz.* recruitment and selection, induction, performance evaluation, training and development, welfare policies and practices etc.), and demographic information about the workforce. These interviews were conducted in Sinhala and were digitally recorded with the consent of the managers. My initial encounter with the MHR at ChillCo lasted about 50 minutes. During the interview the MHR at HotCo took about 30 minutes to cover these specific areas since time and other constraints did not allow us to conduct two interviews as I did with ChillCo's MHR. During these interview sessions I encouraged the participants to explain their views about the questions which I raise. I also asked some follow up questions in the areas that seemed important to further comprehend. Further during and after the interviews I gathered some written documents such as employee handbooks, job applications and the like.

Interviewing Operations/Factory Managers

After my semi-structured interviews with the MHRs of ChillCo and HotCo I interviewed the Operations and the Factory Manager of the companies.[46] The Operation Manager (OM)

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[46] Due to time and spatial constraints I conducted one interview, as I did with the MHR, with the FM of HotCo. At the beginning of the encounter I raised some specific questions and I then encouraged the manager to narrate his version of managing female shopfloor workers on the factory floor in particular and at HotCo

of ChillCo performed a line managerial role under its Factory Manager. However, he was directly responsible for all the aspects of the floor, although he was, officially, not the head of the factory. But at HotCo the 'superior' of the floor was its Factory Manager (FM) who was also responsible for all the aspects of the floor.

My interviews with these managers were focused on gathering and generating data about the nature of the floor (*viz.* layout of the factory floor, production lines and their nature, safety control mechanisms etc.) and of the factory work (*viz.* different job positions and their role on the floor, formal communication channels and the hierarchical relationship between different workers, how shopfloor workers were allocated to different production lines and/or sections, strategies and tactics used to manage them, strategies and methods of achieving production targets etc.) and the like. These interviews were conducted in Sinhala and digitally recorded with the consent of the managers. My encounter with the OM lasted about 30 minutes. The FM at HotCo took about 10-15 minutes to cover the specific questions – which I raised about the nature of the floor and of factory work – during my encounter with him, which subsequently evolved as an unstructured interview. During these interview sessions, as in other semi-structured interview sessions, I encouraged the participants to explain their views about the questions which I raised. Likewise I also asked some follow up questions in the areas that seemed important to further comprehend the nature of the floor and of factory work.

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and in the industry in general. Also I raised some of these specific questions during my encounter with HotCo's Floor Manager.

Unstructured interviews

In addition to the semi-structured interviews I conducted a series of unstructured interviews with different actors in ChillCo and HotCo and in the *kalape*. These unstructured interviews were the prime means of gathering and generating primary data – oral texts that are embedded and embodied in (un/doing) the *lamai* identity in the industry. Selecting unstructured interview method was induced by my ontological position and epistemological position and assumptions (see Mason 2002), which I have already explained. Further in these interviews I did not attempt to obtain answers to pre-determined questions to cover specific topics as in the semi-structured interviews (Fontana and Frey 2000; Bryman and Bell 2007). Rather I encouraged the participants to express their ideas, views and feelings freely by referring or not to a particular socio-organizational encounter, scenario or event wherein female shopfloor workers were/are the central theme and/or the 'subject', or wherein they became an 'object' or were objectified. However, these encounters, scenarios or events were not identified in advance. I traced some of them out based on the background information and some preliminary data about the employment management of the companies which I gathered and generated through the semi-structured interviews. My experiences as the observer were also used to trace these encounters, scenarios and events. Most of these scenarios, however, emerged as these interviews unfolded – perhaps due to my 'interference' in the interview – while the participant was narrating his or her version of managing labour and who s/he was and what s/he was doing at ChillCo/HotCo and in the wider industry. During these interviews, I also used the term *lamai* to refer to the female workers. This was not only to adapt to the scenario as it emerged but also to observe the way in which the participant/s of the interview followed and repeated my utterance. Further in these interviews I situationally interrupted the participants by paraphrasing and by

responding to some points that seemed worthy of follow up (Bryman and Bell 2007) with a view to developing encounters, scenarios or events into a 'story' or 'narrative'.

Participants in these interviews were the MHR, the OM, the Counsellor, a Production Assistant, two supervisors, and three shopfloor workers at ChillCo and, the MHR, the FM, the Assistant Human Resource Manager, the Floor Manager and two shopfloor workers at HotCo. Participants from the *kalape* comprised a matron of the 'girls' hostel', a boarding house owner and his wife, a small shop owner, and three worker-feminist activists. Due to the diversity among the participants, the location and length of these interviews, and the participants' engagement in and enthusiasm for the interviews also varied. For example, the interviews with the managerial actors of ChillCo and HotCo varied between 30 minuets and one hour. However, interviews with shopfloor workers lasted between 15 and 30 minutes. Indeed some non-managerial workers, particularly shopfloor workers, were somewhat reluctant to express their views freely[47] whereas the managers were more comfortable about narrating their 'stories'. The social actors, particularly the worker-feminist activists, in the *kalape* were more expressive. Despite diversity among the participants, all these interviews were conducted in Sinhala as participants were in a more comfortable position when they narrated their stories in their mother tongue.

During these unstructured interviews first I encouraged a context of conversational intimacy in which the participants feel comfortable telling their stories (Corbin and Morse 2003: 338; also Fontana and Frey 2000: 655-656). Then the participants were encouraged

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[47] For instance both the shopfloor workers at HotCo and one worker at ChillCo did not agree to have their interviews digitally recorded.

to tell their stories as they see, feel and experience them. As such the participants were allowed to determine where to begin the story, what topics to include or exclude, the order in which topics were introduced and the amount of detail (Corbin and Morse 2003: 339). Nevertheless this 'order' was not always the case. And the degree of my 'interference' was, as I encountered it, always shaped and aligned not only by the participant's persona and temperament but also by his/her position in the industry – whether s/he was a managerial or non-managerial actor, actor in ChillCo/HotCo or actor in the *kalape*. Except for interviews with three shopfloor workers I was able to record all other interviews digitally with the consent of the participants. Further during these interviews I attempted to record 'non-verbal' elements (Mason 2002) such as mood, temperament, tone etc. of the participant – the narrator of the story – and the ways in which his/her psycho-emotional temperament was changing throughout the interview in my field notebook as far as I could.

Observation

The prime purpose of observation was to create a 'narrative account' of and understand the behaviour, interactions and relationships of different actors in the research settings, particularly in selected socio-spatial areas or arrangements (*viz.* factory floors, cafeterias etc.) in ChillCo and HotCo. It was also aimed at to understand locational and temporal dimensions of these arrangements (Mason 2002). Observation was in fact focused on further comprehending (un)doing shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai*, possibly as part and parcel of managing (female) shopfloor labour in the industry. Thus before I began the fieldwork I planned to conduct my observation sessions on the factory floor, in the cafeterias, at JCC meetings, and during quality circles at ChillCo and HotCo. Further as my fieldwork activities at HotCo moved ahead the company's routine tour of visiting

absent (shopfloor) employees' boarding houses also emerged as a specific socio-spatial arrangement for my observation, although my involvement in this tour cannot be pinned down to a mere observation session. However, I had to remove quality circles from this list as there were none at either company.

Despite this plan about what type of 'locations', who would be the 'participants', 'time duration' etc., in the real research settings I did not attempt to restrict my observation – 'what to observer' (Mulhall 2003) – to these selected areas or arrangements. Thus my conceptions about 'what to observe' and indeed my observation in the research settings unfolded as a rather 'natural' open-ended way (Punch 1998) which was shaped and aligned by the nature of socio-spatial arrangements – which I observed, being part of them – and time and spatial constraints of my research settings (Mason 2002). So even the time which I spent at ChillCo's reception or on the veranda of the Life, a NGO of worker-feminist activists in the *kalape*, for example, were inescapable parts of my observation.

Thus, despite the selected socio-spatial arrangements, a broader understanding of 'what to observe' in the field was *any happening* – behaviour or patterns of behaviour of the different actors – in the research settings, mainly in relation to doing, narrating and undoing the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers. So what I saw and felt in the research settings in general and in these specific socio-spatial arrangements in particular were also part of my observation. For example, my observation and feeling about sudden changes of the tone, mood etc. of one of ChillCo's supervisors during my encounter with her due to unexpected arrival of her boss (ChillCo's OM) in the boardroom where we conducted our encounter was also recorded as part of my observation at this factory.

Despite this open-ended, 'natural' approach to 'what to observe', during my observation sessions I was specific about how different actors, including shopfloor workers themselves, uttered the term *lamai* (along with other residual/relational terms) to refer to female shopfloor workers and the workers' consciousness about or response and reaction to this utterance – doing their collective identity as *lamai* – in these socio-spatial arrangements. Therefore, in a methodological sense, participants in the observation were different actors who were part of these socio-spatial arrangements and locations were the company premises such as factory floor, cafeteria etc. Time duration of each observation varied depending on time which I spent in the arrangements (for example on the factory floor) and/or on their specific time schedules (for example JCC meetings).

Likewise my approach to observation – 'how to observe' – also emerged as an ongoing, flexible-situational one (Mason 2002) since I did not attempt to use observation schedules to record specific behaviour or patterns of behaviour of different actors who were part of the selected socio-spatial arrangements. So it was shaped and aligned by not only the nature and constraints of the research settings but also what I wanted to observe during and in these socio-spatial arrangements. For example my role as an observer at ChillCo's JCC meeting is a rather passive one. But, when doing observation on the factory floor of the company, I engaged with different actors since I wanted to clarify different processes, procedures etc. on the floor. Nevertheless, despite these variations, I was specific about '(un)doing the *lamai* identity' that took place within and as part and parcel of these arrangements. For example, during my observation at ChillCo's JCC meeting I attempted to record as much detail as possible about how managerial and non-managerial actors – including shopfloor workers themselves – uttered the term *lamai* to referrer to and represent

shopfloor workers. Thus as far as my approach to observation are concerned I locate my role as an observer in the research settings as a whole on a participant-observer continuum. It was also characterised by basic principles of 'unstructured' observation (Punch 1998; Mason 2002; Mulhall 2003; Bryman and Bell 2007).

Recording (un)doing lamai identity

During my observation on the factory floor (three days on ChillCo's and two days on HotCo's) I attempted to capture this most vital socio-spatial arrangement – as far as (un)doing *lamai* identity in the industry is concerned – as a (discursive) context in which the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers was being done, restored and even undone by different actors in the companies, perhaps as part and parcel of its (un)doing HRM. During my observation sessions – where I was initially assisted by ChillCo's OM and, HotCo's Floor Manager and an HR executive – I attempted to obtain a holistic picture of the floor by paying special attention to its norms and 'technicalities' (*viz.* layout of the floor, technology, machine-human relationships, rituals etc.) and the behaviour of its actors. Here I was quite specific about different strategies and tactics that were being used to manage (female) shopfloor labour, relationships between different actors and, more importantly, how female shopfloor workers were being addressed and referred to by the workers themselves as well as other actors on the floor during my observation. Although my approach was largely 'passive' observation (Bryman and Bell 2007), I did have brief chats with different actors when I was wandering around the floor. This became part of this socio-spatial arrangement and, in some cases, helped to clarify its happenings – these I was not familiar with or curious about.

I also had a somewhat ambitious plan to observe the cafeterias of ChillCo and HotCo as here I expected to mingle with shopfloor workers during their lunch interval. But I had to give up this plan when I realised the true nature of this 30 minute lunch interval where the workers struggled to get their meal, some time waiting in a long queue. So my two days' observation at ChillCo's cafeteria limited to just wandering around during the lunch interval and on another day to copy down poems, *nisadas* (free verse) etc. published on wall newspapers at the cafeteria. My experience at HotCo's cafeteria was not much different to ChillCo's. However, here I spent more time than I did at ChillCo's cafeteria as HotCo was generous enough to provide me with lunch during my fieldwork activities in the company. But the lunch was served after the 'rush hour' of the cafeteria – time allocated to shopfloor workers. So at HotCo I had to abandon my ambitious plan of observing the cafeteria.

During my observation at JCC meetings, mainly at ChillCo's, I attempted to develop a narrative account of this quasi-industrial relations 'moment' in detail. As a 'passive' observer (Bryman and Bell 2007) here also, my focus was chiefly on the ways in which the term *lamai* (along with other residual/relational terms) was being used by the different actors, including workers themselves, to refer to and represent female shopfloor workers in ChillCo, and the workers' consciousness, reactions and response about this usage – doing their identity as *lamai* – in this context. In addition here I focused on 'non-verbal' elements of the meeting (Mason 2002) and their dynamics such as who was/were at the centre and so who were at the periphery of the meeting, whose voices were realized and whose were not and the like. During this observation I therefore attempted to record behaviour of different actors which emerged as part and parcel of the time and spatial constraints and of the nature

of this socio-spatial arrangement (*viz.* its location, time duration, seating arrangements of the participants etc.).[48]

Finally concerning observation, my involvement in HotCo's routine tour of visiting absent (shopfloor) employees' boarding houses was not a pre-planned one. Thus prior to the tour I did not have a precise idea about what and how I was going to observe during this tour. Nevertheless I was curious about it as the Assistant HR Manager disclosed this unique practice (of *un*doing HRM at HotCo) during my encounter with her. However, as this tour continued I was able to observe – being part of it – how different actors in HotCo and the *kalape* intermingle and entwine with each other to do, narrate and to restore shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* and how this doing of the identity (dis)appeared through the 'deceiving' layers if not textual forms of (un)doing HRM at HotCo. HotCo's Assistant HR Manager, a female worker from its training band,[49] the drive and myself were the participants of this tour. Before the tour we agreed to ignore my presence on the tour unless people whom we were going to visit asked about me. This was not only to avoid unnecessary attention to me during the tour but also to avoid any unnecessary burden to this important routine activity of (*un*doing) HRM at HotCo. However, on one occasion this agreement was breached as one absent employee wanted to know whether I was a new

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[48] However, my observation at HotCo's JCC became a diluted one as this particular meeting was especially arranged to expose me to firsthand experience of the JCC itself. This happened because during my interview with the MHR I told him about my interest in observing a JCC meeting. Neither me nor the shopfloor workers who attended the meeting were aware of this fact. They believed this special meeting was arranged to discuss their upcoming annual trip. I, on the other hand, thought that this was a routine JCC meeting. So having experienced this peculiar nature, within a few minutes I requested the Assistant HR Manager – who chaired the meeting – to sum it up. This nevertheless exemplified me how fragile the JCC is in HotCo and indeed perhaps in the wider industry.

[49] The training division of HotCo's HR department where newly recruited shopfloor workers, mainly machine operators, were trained before they were introduced to the factory floor.

member of ChillCo. I recorded my experiences as observer, particularly in these socio-spatial arrangements – and including this tour – in my fieldwork notebook as detailed summaries of the arrangements. Here I also record my own reflections upon observation sessions, perhaps after the sessions (Mason 2002; Bryman and Bell 2007). After my fieldwork activities in ChillCo and HotCo and subsequently my (dis)engagement with some actors in the *kalape* I moved to the National Library in Sri Lanka.

Using the national library

The objective of using the National Library in Sri Lanka was to gather written texts of the *lamai* identity – secondary data – which were woven and interwoven by social actors such as politicians, journalists, actors in apparel manufacturing companies etc. This was chiefly to synthesise a 'genealogical note' of (doing) the *lamai* identity as part and parcel of the nexus of the texts' in Sri Lanka's apparel industry. Here my focus was mainly on tracing out job advertisements in the industry, feature articles, speeches of politicians and the like on and about the apparel industry, particularly its shopfloor workers, published in Sinhala and English daily and Sunday newspapers during 1979-1985 – the industry in its nascent liberalized economic context – and during the early 1990s – the period in which the President Premadasa implemented his 200 garment factory programme.[50] Referencing these newspapers I also traced written texts of (un)doing HRM in the industry. This was aimed at not only to discern how different actors intermingled and entwined with each other to do,

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[50] In early 1990s, following the second youth insurrection in Sri Lanka (see Gunaratna 1990; Moore 1993), the President Premadasa implemented this programme. Here he persuaded investors to sets up 200 garment factories in rural villages in Sri Lanka as he believed this would ease unemployment and poverty in the rural villages and so eradicate socio-economic causes of another insurrection (see *Daily News* 1992c; Lynch 2007).

narrate and even to undo the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers but also to dissect what role these written texts of (un)doing HRM played in this process.

Constrains and Challenges in the Fieldwork

My fieldwork was not free from constraints and challenges. Other than common time and spatial constraints I had to face some unique and unforeseen challenges when interviewing different actors in the industry. Among these the busy schedules of managers, mainly those who were on the floor, emerged as a main barrier. So, for example, in ChillCo I had to wait more than a week to interview its OM and, in HotCo, I had to restrict my encounters with its FM and MHR to one interview rather than conducting two separate interviews – semi-structured and unstructured – as I had originally scheduled them. On the other hand, shopfloor workers found it difficult to find free time to participate in my interviews, particularly at HotCo. Also, unlike managerial actors, these workers were quite reluctant to express their free views. Thus in some cases their interviews were limited to scattered notes in my field notebook as these workers refused my request to record the encounters digitally. Further to interview these workers I had to largely depend either on the managers in ChillCo and HotCo or even on worker-feminist activists in the *kalape*. These gatekeepers' attitudes and behaviour (Mason 2002), particularly the managers, as I experienced it, tended to shape and align the nature and the effectiveness of the interviews to some extent. For example, at ChillCo, the OM was the only channel to access to these workers. So those whom I interviewed on ChillCo's factory floor (including one supervisor) were the OM's selections.

Being a male researcher also emerged as a socio-cultural barrier, for example to access premises such as the boarding houses, girls' hostels and the like in the *kalape*. To overcome this barrier I had to get support from a female worker-feminist activist in the *kalape*. Moreover, the gap between my schedules for the fieldwork and everyday reality in the research settings which I was part of during the fieldwork affected the data gathering and generating process to some extent.

Despite these constraints and challenges oral and written texts – primarily and secondary data – which I gathered and generated during my fieldwork activities in the multiple research settings, I argue, provide us of a 'textual space' to *re*narrate (doing) female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* in the industry. Therefore now I move to part two of this chapter and so to discuss the ways in which I analyse if not (re)read these texts.

Part Two

Analytical Methods

Discourse Analysis

In this second part of the chapter I discuss the ways in which I analyse and *re*narrate (doing) the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers along with the discursive field or context in which the identity emerges, is done, narrated and even undone. So here I illustrate how I (re)read a variety of different texts that are embodied and embedded in the

lamai identity by putting these texts in the context in which they are woven and interwoven and indeed as part and parcel of the nexus of the texts in Sri Lanka's apparel industry.

The *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers, as I argue in this thesis, is a 'discursively articulated identity' since it is done, narrated, restored and undone through discursive means (see Devanarayana 1997; Lynch 2002; 2007; Hewamanne 2003; 2008). Its (dis)appearance in the industry and wider Sri Lankan society is thus chiefly affirmed and posited textually. Therefore, disregarding the plurivocal nature of (the terms) 'discourse' and 'discourse analysis', discourse analysis can be regarded as the most appropriate analytical method or approach to *re*narrate (doing) the *lamai* identity.

Approaches to discourse and discourse analysis are multiple. They are subject to the ontological and epistemological stances of and analytical differences between those who 'do' discourse analysis as a means of *knowing* the world (Foucault 1972; 1981; Williams 1999; Barker and Galasiński 2000; Oswick et al. 2000a; 2000b; Baxter 2002; Fairclough 2003; 2005; Weiss and Wodak 2003; Grant et al. 2004; Willmott 2005). As such in the present tradition of or debate on discourse and discourse analysis researchers – those who do, undo and are interested in the field of discourse analysis – propose numerous approaches to such analysis. They also highlight the ways in which these approaches distinguish from and corroborate with each other (Chia 2000; Keenoy et al. 2000; Oswick et al. 2000b; Parker 2000; Reed 2000; Tsoukas 2000; Baxter 2002; West 2002; Boje et al. 2005; Fairclough 2005; 2008; Willmott 2005; Billig 2008; Van Dijk 2008). Nevertheless in this debate, as Willmott (2005: 775) points out, the term 'discourse' has become so

polysemic, especially in the context of organization studies, as a consequence of its excessive and ill-defined use.

Despite this plurivocal nature and ill-defined usage in academic literature and organization studies, especially, approaches to discourse analysis are mainly depicted and classified under the labels of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (e.g. Barker and Galasiński 2000; West 2002; Fairclough 2003; 2005; 2008; Weiss and Wodak 2003; Van Dijk 2008), Conversation Analysis (e.g. Stokoe and Weatherall 2002; Ohar and Saft 2003), and Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis (PDA) (e.g. Williams 1999; Baxter 2002; Willmott 2005). Narrative Analysis (NA) has also been treated as part of this ongoing debate on discourse analysis (e.g. Gabriel 2004; Chreim 2005; Atkinson and Delmont 2006). In this context, while not denying the applicability of all these approaches, individually or collectively, to explore and understand the social phenomenon which I deal with in this thesis – i.e., (un)doing *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers in Sri Lanka's apparel industry – my approach to discourse analysis is mainly inspired by the ontological and epistemological position and assumptions and, analytical tools and techniques of the poststructuralist approach to discourse analysis. It is in fact a *version* of PDA which I craft to explore, dissect and use to *re*narrate (doing) the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers in Sri Lanka's apparel industry.

Why PDA?

The *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers, as we have seen, is not as innocent as what the term *lamai* (or *lamaya*) denotes in Sri Lankan society. Rather it is deeply entrenched in the context – the nexus of the texts in Sri Lanka's apparel industry – within which the

identity 'originally' emerged and so at present within which it is being done, narrated, restored and undone. In fact the texts that are embodied and embedded in (doing) the *lamai* identity – i.e., texts of the *lamai* identity – (dis)appear as part and parcel of the nexus of the texts in the industry. As a result, like other texts in the nexus of the texts a text that is embodied and embedded in (doing) the *lamai* identity, I argue, is not an isolated act or utterance which is unique to that text itself. It appears and exists as a relation within the nexus of the texts. Therefore a singular text that embodies and is embedded in *doing* the *lamai* identity always marks its own rupture, always tends to erase what it has already traced as the 'truth' or reality of the identity. Indeed it is, I suggest, always in a position to signify the possibility of *un*doing the identity – which is equally true of a text that (explicitly) embodies and is embedded in *un*doing the identity. Nevertheless, the singularity of the text remains unaltered. Thus the meaning(s) that is embedded and embodied in a text is not unique. Nor can it, however, be generalized. On the other hand, due to the intermingling of a text (of the *lamai* identity) with other texts in the nexus of the texts that text, I argue, not only tends to rupture its own ethico-political aim or boundary – who writes for whom and for what – which distinguishes the text from the rest.

Thus (doing) the *lamai* identity, I argue, neither (dis)appears as a stationary 'thing' nor signifies a singular subject. Instead it appears as something remains under construction, something we produce and reproduce through our 'own' discursive practises (Butler 1988; 1990; Walkerdine 1989; Ybema et al. 2009). Therefore the identity, as we have seen in the previous chapter (2), may change its 'persona' as it oscillates from one con-text to another in the process of (un)doing HRM in the industry. So doing and narrating the *lamai* identity should be undone and renarrated by putting it in its context. In other words it needs to be

located as part and parcel of the nexus of the texts, even though (doing) the *lamai* identity cannot be reduced to a text or set of texts in which it has been embodied and embedded (for example everyday utterances or cinematic texts). Therefore analysing the discursive/textual field of (doing) the *lamai* identity cannot be restricted to a mere linguistic analysis – although textual analysis is an essential part of it (Fairclough 2003).

At this point I argue that to *re*narrate (doing) the *lamai* identity we need to treat text in its poststructuralist sense. Indeed, as I have already suggested, we need to disconnect (the notion of) text from its shallow or narrow meaning and in fact from its form – as a book, a film, a dialogue and so forth. Consequently, we need to treat text *not* as something that suspends reference "…to history, to the world, to reality, to being, and especially not to the other…" but as *referent* itself (Derrida 1988a: 137) and as a polysemic space or landscape where the paths of several *possible* meanings intersect, is embodied and embedded (Barthes 1981: 37). On the other hand, we need to put this text – when we read it – in the context within which it is woven, interwoven and hence read by taking context not as something fixed and intact sphere but as a sum of associative totals of multiple texts which entwine and interconnect like the threads of a web – as I have conceptualized in chapter 2.

Again as indicated earlier we simultaneously need to treat the reader who reads or faces the text, as Ahmed (2002) puts it, not as a mere consumer who faces or consumes the 'known' reality that is embedded and embodied in the text. Instead the reader is a producer who (re)produces the reality, truth, meaning (or whatever it is) of the text by keeping in mind that 'to read' is a labour of language and so reading is a 'metonymic labour' of the reader (Barthes 1974; also Derrida 1997). Here we likewise need to treat 'meaning' of the text in

its poststructuralist sense – i.e., meaning exists in the difference between relational terms to which current representations defer (Clegg 1994: 151) and so "As soon as there is meaning, there is difference" (Johnson 1981: ix). Therefore, in sum, language or text (re)produces meaning through difference (Derrida 1978; 1982; 1997). Indeed the truth or meaning of a text (of the *lamai* identity), I suggest, is neither singular nor fixed. Nor is it indeterminable. Rather it, as Derrida tells us, "… must await being said or written in order to inhabit itself, and in order to become, by *differing* from itself, what it is: meaning" (1978: 11; emphasis mine). So a text (of the *lamai* identity), I argue, is not a mirror or a mere means of re-presentation of female shopfloor workers' very (non)existence in Sri Lanka's apparel industry as *lamai*. Rather it *supplements* – which is always an act of appropriation (see Derrida 1997; also Spivak 1988a) – as well as being embodied and embedded in this very (non)existence as *lamai*; the everyday social reality of female shopfloor workers in the industry (Denzin 1997; Dick 2006).

In this context, I craft, treat and put forward (a version of) PDA – not as opposed to other relational/residual approaches to discourse analysis but with a critique of them – as the most appropriate if not palatable analytical means to *re*narrate (doing) the *lamai* identity. However, although I would sideline CA – due to the nature of social phenomena I am dealing with in this thesis, since CA is not regarded as a 'context-sensitive' approach (Grant et al. 2004) – I accept the fact that both CDA and PDA are sensible approaches as far as this *re*narration effort is concerned. Both approaches attempt to go 'beyond' text – especially if we treat text in its shallow or narrow meaning (as a book etc.) – while paying substantial attention to the context in which the text emerged (Baxter 2002). Having accepted this 'applicability' of CDA, my preference for PDA and thus my displeasure with

and critique of CDA – among other generic 'flaws' (see Tsoukas 2000; Baxter 2002; Willmott 2005; Billig 2008) as far as the social phenomenon or phenomena which I am dealing with in this thesis is concerned – is mainly ontological.

Why ontology matters?

Critical realists (and so CDA), as Reed tells us, "…are committed to a *stratified* ontology in which deeper structures or mechanisms shape events and regularities at a surface level" (2005: 1630; emphasis mine).[51] Following this stratified or layered ontological position critical realists and so CDA, on the one hand, distinguish the 'natural world' from the 'social world' and argue that the former is *not* dependent on human action for its existence, but the latter is socially constructed (Fairclough 2005: 922). Indeed they claim and rely on an 'extra linguistic reality' (Fairclough 2003; 2005) and hence 'materially real' entities such as oceans, the weather, mountains and the like which can exist *independently* of what we do, say or think (Fleetwood 2005: 199). So CDA and its stratified ontology see what critical realists call processes/events (e.g. football games, texts etc.) and real structures (e.g. economic structures, social classes etc.) as different strata of social reality with different properties (Fairclough 2005: 922; also 2003). These real or deeper structures or mechanisms – with their associated 'causal powers' – critical realists suggest, contingently generate actual events and outcome (Fairclough 2005: 922; Reed 2005: 1630). In other

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[51] It should be noted here that it is harder to find out *the* ontological position of *critical* realism. Also some critics of critical realism, for example Contu and Willmott (2005: 1646), distinguish 'Critical Realism' – which is primarily attentive to issue of ontology and epistemology – from 'critical realism' which involves a more or less conversant of other forms of analysis (e.g. CDA). Despite these differences, '*critical* realists' commonly claim what they call 'stratified ontology'. So what I mean ontological position of CDA here is the stratified or layered ontology of 'critical realism' (see for example Fairclough 2003; 2005; Reed 2005; Vincent 2008).

word they shape events and regularities at a 'surface' level (Reed 2005: 1630; also Fairclough 2003; Fleetwood 2005). This stratified ontology of CDA therefore "…divides the *real* structures and mechanisms of the world and the *actual* patterns of events that they generate…" (Willmott 2005: 750; original emphasis; see also Reed 2005).

On the other hand, based on this stratified ontological position critical realists and so CDA not only encourages us to adopt a 'dualistic' analytical position – "…which applies to discourse as well as to *other elements of the social*, which regards 'discourse' as subsuming both linguistic/semiotic elements of social events and linguistic/semiotic facets of social structures, as well as of the 'social practices'…" (Fairclough 2005: 916, emphasis mine) – by taking text as a social event at a 'surface' level which is shaped by deeper or real structures as well as social practices and agents (Fairclough 2003). They also take discourse, language, genres, meaning etc. as what critical realists call 'ideally real' 'conceptual entities' which may or may *not* have a referent (Fleetwood 2005: 200). To be clear, for me this stratified or layered ontology of critical realists and indeed of CDA is problematic. This, as I argue, primarily creates two problems.

First, there is the problem of how these 'materially real' entities or 'intransitive objects' exist by themselves, independently of what we do, say or think – along with more abstract and durable social/real structures (Fairclough 2003; 2005; Reed 2005). Indeed, as Contu and Willmott simply put it, "…. 'how do you [we] know that this is the way the world is?'"(2005: 1648). This stratified ontological position, I argue, troubles critical realists themselves or makes their arguments inconsistent. This, in particular, emerges when they attempt to split this world into two, one which is *not* dependent on human action for its

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existence (the natural world) and the other, in contrast, is socially constructed (the social world). For example, Fleetwood suggests that there are material or 'materially real' entities "… such as oceans, weather, the moon and mountains, which can exist independently of what individuals or communities do, say or think" (2005: 199; see also Fairclough 2005). Then he tells us that "Clearly, in some cases materially real entities are affected by our actions", although they "…would continue to exist even if human disappeared" (2005: 200). As such Fleetwood, on the one hand, claims for material objects which can exist independently of human action. On the other hand, he accepts the fact that (non)existence of these objects is affected by human action. Ironically here Fleetwood is careful not to mention the so-called 'materially real' entities like the Ozone layer – in which (non)existence is, at present, severely affected by what we say or think as well as what we do – as an exemplar of the entities. As I argue, these entities like the Ozone layer are not only affected by our action but also we – environmentalists, politicians, scientists and so forth – have our 'own' version or interpretation of their existence as well as non-existence. Therefore, for me, these materially real or natural entities are not 'things' that exist independently of what we do, say or think – indeed of discourse. Rather, as Laclau and Mouffe tell us, "… the idea of nature is not something that is already there, to be read from the appearance of things, but is itself the result of a slow and complex historical and social construction" (cited in Willmott 2005: 765). So for me these materially real entities are not things that exist outside of discourse. Likewise the natural and social worlds cannot be separated from one other. Indeed, as Tsoukas reminds us, "Realists [and so CDA] typically make the mistake of thinking that there is an extra-linguistic reality, in the sense that there are 'intransitive objects' and 'real structures' in the world which are independent of actors' descriptions of them" (2000: 531; see also Willmott 2005).

Second, and related to the previous problem or point, I argue that critical realists and so CDA not only 'really' miss, the relationship between language and (*re*production of) meaning (see Derrida 1978; 1982; 1997; Dick 2006) when they put these into a (conceptual) pigeonhole called 'ideally real' – which may or may *not* have a referent (Fleetwood 2005: 200). They also risk setting one up against and over the other when they suggest us an analytical dualism which applies or distinguishes discourse from non-discursive elements – other elements of the social – by treating text as a mere element of 'social events' at a 'surface' level (Fairclough 2003; 2005). But language or text, as we have already recognized, is not a sheer ideally real entity which may not have referent. Nor can we 'separate' language from meaning or vice versa. Instead language or text, as we have seen, (re)produces meaning through difference (Derrida 1978; 1982; 1997). Indeed, as Dick suggests, it "… produces meaning through the interplay of referential and indexical meaning: This interplay refers to the material world, while also constructing that world through the creative manipulation of language that indexes the context in which it is uttered" (2006: 90).

Similarly we cannot 'know' the world dualistically – through the non-discursive–discursive dualism – because as with other (modernist) dualisms this realist dualism, I argue, ignores the dialectical relationship between the two constructs and so risk setting one up against and over the other. So this non-discursive–discursive dualism, as Willmott (2005: 765-766) puts it, is a (mis)understanding that is based upon a dualism – of context and text. In fact realists, while accusing poststructuralists of narrowing down this world, its materiality (whatever this is), into text (see Fairclough 2005; Reed 2005) take no notice of what Derrida (1988a: 137) says, that "…the concept of text or of context … does not exclude the

world, reality, history [as realists believe]". Instead they highlight the non-discursive–discursive and so the context–text dualisms by restricting text largely into a social event at a 'surface' level as well as into its *form* as a book, graphic, transcripts of (spoken) interviews and the like which are shaped by the causal power of real or deeper structures and social practices as well as by social agents (Fairclough 2003; 2005). However, this dualism, as any other dualisms (in the western thought), is, I argue, structured as a binary pair of opposites which always tends to privilege one over the other by creating a pre-eminent centre which is always the former but not the latter (for critique see Derrida 1981; 1997; Spivak 1988b; 2001). Therefore this second term of the pair – i.e., discourse or text in this case – is considered the negative, corrupt, undesirable version of the first (deeper structures or context), a fall away from it (Johnson 1981: viii). In other worlds it is a contaminated version – at a surface level – of casual power of deeper structures (see Fairclough 2003; 2005).

Thus the stratified ontology of CDA and its non-discursive–discursive and so context–text separations if not dualisms do not put me in a comfortable (analytical) position as far as the social phenomena which I confront and deal with, and so my ethico-political objective for renarrating (doing) the *lamai* identity are concerned. These dualisms indeed do not provide me with a sensible analytical means to 'know' what role the text 'really' plays in the process of (un)doing female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* in the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry where "…our very relation to "reality" already functions like a text" (Johnson 1981: xvi).

Therefore, my approach to renarration of (doing) the *lamai* identity – the version of PDA which I craft and employ in this thesis as the prime analytical method – not only rejects the non-discursive–discursive and so the context–text dualisms. It also, more importantly, is inspired by the ontological stance of poststructuralism (Willmott 2005), where social 'reality' is *not* something *outside* of discourses. Instead it is what we produce and reproduce through and by discursive means (Chia 2000; Iedema 2007). This does not, however, mean that I deny the materiality of the world, which realists are eager to know if not unveil. Nor is it an attempt to narrow down this world – the workers' very (non)existence in Sri Lanka's apparel industry as *lamai* – into text, which is often identified as an act of the 'extreme' forms of social constructivism. On the contrary, as Laclau and Mouffe recount:

> What is denied [here] is not that such objects exist externally to thought, but the
> rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside
> any discursive condition of emergence. (cited in Willmott 2005: 765)

Thus, although I accept the fact that 'multiple realities' in this world are produced, reproduced through discursive means, I do not deny its materiality (whatever this is). Instead I argue that the materiality of the world – *childrenization* of female (shopfloor) labour/workers in the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry and so their very (non)existence in the industry as *lamai* – is not something that exists outside of discourse or texts. Indeed this very (non)existence of female shopfloor workers in the industry as *lamai*, I argue, is not only *itself* a text, but it is a text that speaks only about the textuality of this (non)existence (Johnson 1981: xiv). Therefore, as far as analysing the discursive field of (doing) the *lamai* identity is concerned, PDA puts me in a relatively comfortable theoretical/analytical position by not only rupturing the context–text dualism along with the

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non-discursive–discursive dualism in CDA. It also allows me to treat the text not as a contaminated version of causal power of the real structures etc. but as a 'thing' which does not deny the materiality – indeed as a 'thing' which refers to it (Derrida 1988a; Jenkins 2000). However, although I employ PDA as the prime analytical method, I am determined not to be a victim of the extreme ontological/epistemological rivalry between 'realism' and 'social constructivism' or 'poststructuralism' (Tsoukas 2000) and thus between CDA and PDA. Therefore, even though I accept the fact that the plurivocal nature of discourse and discourse analysis opens up new avenues for those who 'do' discourse analysis with a view to knowing and perhaps changing this world I argue that such extreme rivalry not only is being played out at the expense of 'how to change the world', but also consumes discussions about 'how to know it'. Indeed it takes no notice of the ethico-political question raised by Parker (2000: 523) – "…what discourses [do] we want to sponsor"?

Therefore, by going beyond this rivalry, the version of PDA which I want to promote here is not only aimed at how to explore and understand the childrenization of female (shopfloor) labour in Sri Lanka's apparel industry and its impact on managing (shopfloor) labour in the industry and vice versa. It is also a means of *re*narrating (doing) the *lamai* identity. So PDA in this thesis certainly takes into consideration context within which the text emerges, not in the manner in which realists articulate as an 'analytical dualism'– on the side of discourse and other elements of the social or non-discursive elements (Fairclough 2003; 2005) – but as inseparable spheres of the field of the discursivity of female (shopfloor) labour (identity) as *lamai*. Therefore, PDA in this thesis is inspired by many (poststructuralist) theoretical/methodological stances. Further it is strengthened by different techniques in discourse and textual analysis such as intertextual and interdiscursive analysis which PDA

and CDA equally share (Baxter 2002; Fairclough 2003; 2005; Keenoy and Oswick 2003; Broadfoot et al. 2004). These techniques, I hope, strengthen the analysis and indeed reinforce the work of PDA, which I am now going to illustrate.

PDA and Renarrating *Lamai* Identity

As Willmott (2005: 773) notes "When it comes to specifying different forms of discourse analysis… the only approach identified as attending to 'context' (as contrasted with 'text') in a 'critical', as contrasted to 'descriptive', manner is critical discourse analysis (CDA)… Other forms of analysis …are unacknowledged and, effectively, rendered invisible". As one of these 'other forms', PDA is not given the recognition it deserves. So PDA is widely unacknowledged in the debate on discourse and discourse analysis (see Van Dijk 1999). It is usually categorised as Foucauldian discourse analysis (e.g. Reed 2000) and plays a peripheral role in the domain of discourse analysis *per se*. The reason for not recognizing PDA as a unique approach in its own right, I argue, is not only due to the ways in which the debate is carried out, but also owing to the plurivocal nature of poststructuralist approach(es) to discourse and discourse analysis. In fact PDA, which is mainly inspired by Foucault, Barthes, Derrida, and Laclau and Mouffe who are often known as 'poststructuralists'[52] (Williams 1999; Baxter 2002; Willmott 2005), usually appears under their (authoritative) 'names'. Also it does not offer any unique set of analytical tools and techniques, which is perhaps the case in CDA (see for example Fairclough 2003; 2005). So it chiefly remains as an open-ended approach and so, as Baxter (2002: 828) notes, perhaps it cannot *essentially* be viewed as a theoretically confident paradigm 'in its own right'.

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[52] This categorization is not precise and final. For example Barthes is sometimes categorised as a poststructuralist (Baxter 2002) but also as a structuralist (Williams 1999).

But this open-ended nature of poststructuralist approach(es) to discourse analysis does not hinder our attempt at using PDA as a means of 'knowing' the world. Instead I argue that it allows us to amalgamate different notions, theories and analytical techniques to explore, dissect and problematize the social phenomenon in question, even bracketing rivalry among different approaches and theoretical stances. Thus the (version of) PDA which I put forward in this thesis is inspired by different theoretical stances and notions, mainly of Derrida, Barthes and Foucault, although these of course are not without their critics (Reed 2000; West 2002; Fairclough 2008; Van Dijk 2008) as well as counter critics (Baxter 2002; Willmott 2005; Billig 2008). So owing to this 'open-ended' nature now I discuss the ways in which I amalgamate these notions, techniques etc. to renarrate (doing) the *lamai* identity in detail.

(Reading) Text *qua* context

As we have seen, PDA in this thesis insists on the importance of and so performs the role of 'con-textualization' of (doing) the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers in Sri Lanka's apparel industry. It also aims to facilitate us to engage not only with the search for a plenitude of meaning, but, more importantly, with a search for a scarcity of meaning, with what cannot be said, with what is impossible or unreasonable within certain discursive locations – ChillCo, HotCo and my other research settings (Hook 2001: 527; also Foucault 1972). So PDA avoids the risk of reducing renarration of (doing) the *lamai* identity to the 'markings of (its) textuality' (Hook 2001). Rather, by treating text as a referent – of the childrenization of female (shopfloor) labour in the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry – it acknowledges the role of text and hence textual analysis as an inextricable part of renarrating (doing) the *lamai* identity. This is because text is not only the means which

transmits or signifies (doing) the *lamai* identity – female shopfloor workers' very (non)existence as *lamai* in the apparel industry. It is also, more importantly, the means of narrating and renarrating the identity where the sign, as we have seen it in the previous chapter (2), supplements the 'thing' itself (Derrida 1997).

Thus, by taking context and text as a reciprocally interacting cohesive whole (Derrida 1988a; Çalişkan 2005) PDA in this thesis provides us of a means not only to bring back unrealised, subjugated or perhaps subversive voices/stories of the female workers about their very (non)existence as *lamai* into the discursive context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry. It also allows us to dissect and problematize the manner in which the *lamai* identity is produced and reproduced through discursive means by putting the identity in its (discursive) context(s) (Foucault 1981). So I argue that it provides us with a palatable means to understand how the identity of female shopfloor workers (as *lamai*) is constantly produced and reproduced, positioned and repositioned through discourses (Butler 1988; 1990; Walkerdine 1989) – as opposed to the notion of fixed identity as a set of socialized, transferable roles (Baxter 2002: 829). Further it facilitates us to understand how the signifier/identity *lamai* substitutes for (and is substituted by) other residual/relational signifiers/identities such as *kello* (girls), garment *lamai*, team members, *tharuniyan* (young women) and so forth, as it oscillates from one con-text to another, in the process of (un)doing HRM in the industry (Derrida 1997). Indeed PDA, I argue, allows us to understand the heterogeneous nature of the identity and its becoming which (dis)appears under the collective signature of *lamai*.

In this context, by articulating the field of discursivity of the *lamai* identity as a 'violent (textual) sphere' in which various social actors do (and undo) the collective identity of female shopfloor workers in Sri Lanka's apparel industry (Foucault 1981), I arrange this renarrating effort or journey under three interconnected phases – three data analysis chapters (4, 5 and 6) – to make this journey palatable. In the first chapter, entitled '(Re)Narrating *Lamai*: a genealogical note', my prime focus is on synthesising a genealogical note of (doing) the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers. Indeed here I explore and problematize how different social actors have gathered together and intermingled to (un)do the workers' collective identity as *lamai* – the discursive formation of the *lamai* identity – since the women's arrival in the apparel industry. Thus here my analysis of the formation of the *lamai* identity is inspired primarily by Foucault's notion of genealogy (1981; also 1984; 1998b) in what he suggests two sets of discourse analysis, namely the 'critical set' and 'genealogical set'.[53] In this analysis I therefore explore and dissect the effective formation (of the discursive field) of the *lamai* identity either within the limits of the instances of discursive control of children or little ones and (ideal) womanhood in Sri Lankan society (see Jayawardena 1994; 2000; Hewamanne 2008) or outside them (Foucault 1981) – since migrant young women's arrival in the apparel

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[53] According to Foucault the critical analysis or set examines the function of exclusion, the processes of depletion, what he (1981:55) says the three great systems of exclusion – the prohibition (of speech), the division (of madness) and the will to truth. The genealogical set, on the other hand, examines the formation of discourses by putting other three principles – i.e., discontinuity, specificity and exteriority – into practice (Foucault 1981). Thus as far as synthesising the genealogical note of (un)doing the *lamai* identity is concerned here my focus is mainly on genealogical analysis. Nevertheless in this analysis I neither deny the intermingling of these two sets/notions nor reject the close association of Foucault's notion of genealogy with his notion of archaeology. Nor do I attempt to narrow down genealogy into a mere analytical technique (see for critique and detail Foucault 1980; 1981; 1983; 1998a; 1998b). Instead my emphasis on genealogy is due to the fact that here I attempt to analyse, discern and problematize how the workers' collective identity as *lamai* in the industry has been formed since the women's arrival in the industry.

industry. So here I explore and dissect how did the series of discourses of female (shopfloor) labour and so of female shopfloor workers' collective identity or identities (*viz. lamai*, *ganu lamai* - girls, *Juki kello - Juki* girls, machine operators etc.) in the industry come to be formed since the women's arrival in the apparel industry? Also I dissect what were/are the specific norms of each one and how they intermingle and entwine with each other? Simultaneously I analyse and problematize what were/are the conditions of appearance or emergence, variation as well as 'evaporation' of these identities in different historical events or moments in the industry (Foucault 1981). Further I dissect what role other axes of power relations, particularly class, plays in this process (Butler 1990).

Therefore, my analysis as a whole is a means to explore and understand the ways in which different social actors have gathered together, characterized, and finally treated and restored female shopfloor workers as *lamai* in Sri Lanka's apparel industry, particularly in the industry in its nascent liberalized economic context, despite their wage labour role. In fact other than realized voices and events here I explore and analyse 'unrealised', 'subjugated' or perhaps 'subversive' narratives of female workers and female labour (identity) in the written texts of (doing) the *lamai* identity – as part and parcel of the nexus of the texts in the industry – by bringing the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality, and by seeking them in outside the nominalized historical events in the industry (Foucault 1998b: 369).

To achieve this 'genealogical aim' (Foucault 1983) and indeed to synthesize a genealogical note of (doing) the *lamai* identity I read different written texts of the *lamai* identity (*viz.* job advertisements, newspaper reportage, cinematic texts etc.) by bracketing their

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heterogeneous nature for a moment. But my reading of these texts is not authoritative and final, although it is not ethico-politically passive. Instead it is a supplemental-critical reading which aims "… at a certain relationship, unperceived by the writer [of the text], between what he [she] commands and what he [she] does not command of the patterns of the language that he [she] uses" (Derrida 1997: 158). This reading, like the signifier/identity *lamai,* thus always remains unfinished, open-ended and is always awaiting the next supplement.

In my reading of these texts I therefore dissect what the text has untold and unnarrated other than what it explicitly narrates and intends to tell. I argue that this 'never-said' is always there in the text "… [as] a voice as silent as a breath, a writing that is merely the hollow of its own mark" as Foucault (1972: 25) suggests us. Also I examine the manner in which the 'interior' of the text ruptures its 'exterior' and vice versa in its attempts to mark the workers' very (non)existence as *lamai* in the industry (Barthes 2000). Further I do intertextual and interdiscursive analysis to understand how and to what extent these texts incorporate and represent 'other voices' – indeed how they appear as part and parcel of the nexus of the texts. So here I explore and analyse how different discources and voices – other than the author's voice – are articulated, embodied and embedded in the text which s/he weaves and interweaves (Fairclough 2003; 2005; Keenoy and Oswick 2003; Broadfoot et al. 2004). Simultaneously I examine and problematize how a text – of the *lamai* identity – tends to mark its own rupture and so erases what it has already traced as the 'truth' of (un)doing the *lamai* identity when the text appears and exists as a relation within the nexus of the texts. In fact in this reading I dissect whether this tends to upset the ethico-political aim or boundary of the text (who writes for whom and for what) as well as its

'chronological place' in the nexus of the texts. And, consequently, I examine how different actors/texts utter the term *lamai* to refer to and represent the workers. Indeed I analyse whether this same signifier *lamai* also marks the workers' resistance to doing their identity as *lamai* and so tends to *un*do their very (non)existence in the industry as *lamai* while simultaneously signifying and doing the *lamai* identity itself. Moreover, my reading focuses on and dissects how the signifier/identity *lamai* substitutes for (and is substituted by) other residual/relational signifiers/identities such as *ganu lamai* (young women or girls), *tharuniyan* (young women), *kello* (girls), workers and so forth as it oscillates from one con-text to another (Derrida 1997). Here I also dissect how this dangerous supplement tends to adjust and appropriate the workers' collective identity in the industry and so how it affects the reader's – who faces the text of *lamai* identity – realization of the 'truth' of (un)doing the workers' collective identity as *lamai* in the industry.

However, in this reading I neither attempt to establish a gradual growth in nor trace a straight line of the discursive formation of the *lamai* identity. Rather I isolate different 'scenes' or 'events' – which are embedded and embodied in multiple texts of the nexus of the texts – that emerged and took place at different historical moments in the industry (Foucault 1998b: 369). And so here I search for the heterogeneous nature and the becoming of the identity – which (dis)appears under the collective signature of *lamai* – as opposed to its linear development (Butler 1988; 1990). For example, I dissect and problematize the 'evaporation' of the signifier/identity *lamai* in official texts of (doing) HRM in a particular historical moment or context in the industry while it continues to appear in 'local texts' (of undoing HRM) such as newspaper reportage, cinematic texts etc. Indeed my attempt is not to re-establish or valorise already said, narrated and realised narratives of female

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(shopfloor) labour and the *lamai* identity but to bring back unsaid, absent and unrealised narratives to the present discursive context in order to explore and understand the present peculiarities of female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* (Foucault 1998b: 369) in the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry (Derrida 1993).

In second data analysis chapter (5), entitled '(Re)Narrating *Lamai*: A Tale(s) of Two Cities', my prime focus is on how female shopfloor workers' collective identity is done, narrated and even undone by various actors in ChillCo and HotCo and, how this doing (and undoing) takes place in the process of and as part and parcel of (un)doing HRM in these two companies in particular and the wider industry in general. Adhering to the way I conceptualize HRM in the industry – i.e., HRM as a 'web of texts' (see chapter 2) – here I examine how textual HRM and local texts intermingle and entwine with each other with a view to managing female shopfloor labour in ChillCo and HotCo. For this I read a variety of different texts, mostly oral texts, woven and interwoven by different actors in these companies. And so I dissect the ways in which textual HRM intermingles and entwines with local texts (of undoing HRM) while taking energy from the latter with a view to managing (female shopfloor) labour in the industry. Here I explore what role this interplay plays in the process of (un)doing female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* – whether it tends to normalize or 'legitimize' doing the workers' collective identity as *lamai* in these work milieus. Further I examine how the signifier/identity *lamai* substitutes for (and is substituted by) other residual/relational signifiers/identities such as, *daruwo* (children, daughters or sons), team members, machine operators etc. which are uttered and/or coined in ChillCo and HotCo, as it oscillates from one con-text to another in the process of (un)doing HRM in these work milieus (Derrida 1997). Simultaneously I analyse

whether this substitution tends to blur the reader's realization of not only the 'truth' of (doing) the *lamai* identity but also the 'agenda of gender' of HRM in the industry and, if so, how and why. Here I dissect the intermingling of not only textual HRM with local texts, but also oral texts with written texts as well as texts in English with texts in Sinhala. Moreover, in this reading I examine how these texts – which are woven and interwoven by different actors in the two work milieus – entwine with and appear as part and parcel of other texts in the nexus of the texts of the industry. As such here I do intertextual and interdiscursive analysis – whenever they seem important to renarrate (doing) the *lamai* identity in ChillCo and HotCo – to explore and analyse how texts that are woven and interwoven in these work milieus incorporate and represent meanings or voices that are embedded and embodied in the texts woven and interwoven in wider Sri Lankan society. Indeed here I examine whether this intermingling tend to upset the ethico-political aim or boundary of these text along with their 'chronological place' in the nexus of the texts.

In final data analysis chapter (6), entitled '(Re)Narrating *Lamai*: un-doing *lamai* in the *kalape*', I explore and dissect how social actors in the *kalape* (*viz.* boarding house owners, worker-feminist activists etc.) narrate, do and restore the workers' collective identity as *lamai* along with some explicit attempts at *un*doing the identity (see Butler 1990; 2004). Therefore here my prime focus is not only on these social actors' involvement in doing the *lamai* identity. It is also, more importantly, on what these explicit attempts at 'undoing' really do for the discursive field of the *lamai* identity; whether they undo the workers' very (non)existence as *lamai* in the industry and, if so, how. For this I read different oral and written texts of the *lamai* identity which are woven and interwoven by the actors in the *kalape* (including workers themselves) such as owners of the boarding houses, worker-

feminist activists etc. Here I dissect whether the workers' village roots and hence identity as *gode ganu lamai* (rustic girls) – as portrayed by the actors in the *kalape* – suppress and efface their wage labour role in the industry as proletarian women in the Global South and, if so, how. Thus here again I dissect how the term/signifier *lamai* substitutes for and (is substituted by) other residual/relational signifiers/identities such as *kamkaru sthreen* (female labourers), garment *lamai* etc. which are uttered and/or coined by these actors as it oscillates from one con-text to another (Derrida 1997). Intertextual and interdiscursive analysis is once more employed to understand and problematize the ways in which these actors depend on or take energy from social discourses of ideal womanhood, the city–village dualism etc. in wider Sri Lanka society in the process of (un)doing the workers' collective identity in the context of the *kalape*. Further in this reading I examine the ways in which these actors do (and undo) the *lamai* identity in the context of the *kalape* and how this (un)doing intermingles and is complicit with as well as differs from other texts of the *lamai* identity in the nexus of the texts – these which the reader has already faced. Here I am particular about how workers' 'own' acts – their 'subversive' aesthetic practices – tend to *un*do their collective identity as *lamai* in the industry (Butler 1990; 2004).

Finally in this chapter, I examine whether these explicit attempts of *un*doing the *lamai* identity also mark their own rupture and, if so, how. Indeed I examine how a text which (explicitly) embodies *undoing* the *lamai* identity also tends to do and restore the identity itself. Similarly I dissect and problematize how a text which (explicitly) embodies *doing* the *lamai* identity also marks its own rupture. As in the previous chapters (4 and 5) here I examine whether this same signifier *lamai* marks the workers' resistance to this doing and,

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consequently, tends to undo their very (non)existence in the industry as *lamai* while at the meantime signifying and doing the *lamai* identity itself.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I discuss the nature, ontological/epistemological stances, and tools and techniques of the methodology of the thesis. In my discussion of the fieldwork (part one) I illustrate the phases of the fieldwork, the rationale for choosing different research settings, the ways in which I classify data, data gathering and generating methods and techniques and, finally the constraints and challenges which I faced during different phases and locations of the fieldwork. In part two, my discussion of the analytical methods, I review and discuss the analytical approaches which I put into practice to *re*narrate (doing) the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers. Here it argues that PDA – against other approaches to discourse analysis – can be considered as the most appropriate if not palatable approach to renarrate (doing) the *lamai* identity. This rationale is – among other 'pros' of PDA – mainly two-fold. On the one hand, PDA takes into consideration both text and context within which the former emerges not as from a dualism – as in CDA – but as two spheres which intermingle with each other as a cohesive whole. On the other hand, PDA takes text not as a mere social event at a 'surface' level shaped by deeper structures – as in CDA – but as a referent (of materiality, reality etc.) and as a polysemic sphere where multiple meanings intersect while not narrowing down the materiality of the world into text. The chapter, then, spells out how this renarration effort if not journey of (doing) the *lamai* identity in this thesis is organized under interconnected phases – three data analysis chapters. However, it argues that this journey will offer neither a final nor authoritative reading of the texts of the *lamai* identity, but primarily a supplementary-critical reading,

although it is not ethico-politically passive. In this context, as concluding remarks, I argue that during this *re*narration journey we need to pay equal attention to actors in ChillCo and HotCo, in the *kalape* as well as in the wider Sri Lankan society as they were/are all involved in (un)doing the workers' collective identity as *lamai* in the industry. Indeed we need to read the texts that are woven and interwoven by these actors not as singular texts, but as part and parcel of other texts in the nexus of the texts in the industry. Therefore I now invite the reader of this *re*narration journey to engage with my attempt at synthesising a 'genealogical note' of (un)doing the *lamai* identity.

CHAPTER 4

(Re)Narrating *Lamai*:
A genealogical note

Introduction

The *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers in Sri Lanka's apparel industry, as the nexus of the texts embodies, is neither an entirely 'new' identity nor a re-presentation of their *ganu lamai* (young women or girls) identity in wider Sri Lankan society as such. Nor is it even a mere replica or simulacrum of the latter. Rather the identity, as I argue in chapter 2, is a historico-political 'surplus' of the feminization of Sri Lanka's apparel industry – the conscious or unconscious, deliberate or unintentional reluctance of the actors in the apparel industry as well as in wider Sri Lankan society to accept the rise of female wage labour in the industry as something 'real' – in which adult factory women become 'little ones'. In this chapter I therefore dissect how the identity has been formed and constructed and how different social actors have gathered together and intermingled to do, narrate and restore it since these young women's arrival in the industry in its nascent liberalized context. Indeed this chapter as a whole aims to synthesize a 'genealogical note' of the discursive formation of the *lamai* identity.

The chapter begins with my reading of the brand, the identity, *Juki* – how the *lamai* identity intermingled with and emerged in the industry as part and parcel of the Japanese powered sewing machine, *Juki*. Here I read some exemplar texts (*viz.* job advertisements, newspaper reportage etc.) that are woven and interwoven by different social actors in the industry and wider Sri Lankan society by bracketing the heterogeneous nature of these texts for a

moment. Then the chapter marks and dissects the beginning of the process of (apparent) evaporation of *Juki* – in official-written texts of the industry, particularly of managing labour – as the signification/signifier of the workers' estranged labour and so of their collective identity, *Juki lamai*, in the industry. In fact my analysis shows how the signifier/the identity *lamai* takes the place of other residual/relational signifiers/identities (*viz. tharuniyan* - young women etc.) as an 'innocent', general(ized) everyday utterance/identity from the mid 1980s by coining 'feminine' job titles, perhaps unique to the industry. Subsequently I demonstrate and analyse how the term/identity *lamai* itself 'evaporated' in the official-written texts of (doing) HRM.

But this 'evaporation' is not a total effacement of the *lamai* identity, rather its deferred presence. Indeed here the chapter reads official-written texts of (doing) HRM (e.g. job advertisements) and illustrates the ways in which the *lamai* identity (dis)appears even in these texts in the industry's present context. At this point I move to examine some selected 'local texts' (of undoing HRM), particularly cinematic texts. By reading these texts I further problematize the 'evaporation' of the *lamai* identity in official-written texts of (doing) HRM and so the identity itself. Indeed here the chapter shows how (doing) the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers becomes our 'everyday' experience in the work milieu as well as in wider social milieus. Simultaneously the chapter also dissects how the term/identity *lamai* (and *lamaya*) substitutes for (and is substituted by) other relational/residual terms/identities such as *kello* (girls), *duwa* (daughter) etc. as it oscillates from one context to another. So the chapter marks the heterogeneous, fragmented nature of the identity – its becoming. And, consequently, it also shows resistance, mainly by the workers themselves, to doing the identity and indeed some attempts at undoing it – as

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marked particularly in cinematic texts. Here the chapter shows and problematizes the double-bind nature of the identity – its aporia. In its concluding remarks, the chapter argues that doing female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* creates an 'indissoluble' ethical paradox within which adult, able female factory workers become *lamai* and, consequently, objects or the othered Other – *Juki kello* (*Juki* girls) if not *keli* (pieces) – in Sri Lanka's apparel industry. Nevertheless, the chapter does not conclude that this aporia of the *lamai* identity makes *un*doing and *re*narrating the identity impossible. Rather it implies how this impossibility, this aporia, makes such an undoing possible.

Juki: The Brand, The Identity

Sri Lanka's apparel industry in its nascent liberalized economic context tended to glorify the emerging 'modern global assembly line', powered mostly by the Japanese sewing machine *Juki*. The brand *Juki,* at the very beginning of the industry, thus emerged as the symbol of the localized global factory floor or assembly line, its 'efficiency' and 'state-of-art technology', for example as the symbol of 'today's efficiency', which was evident even as late as the early 1990s (e.g. *Daily News* 1992a; *Sunday Observer* 1992). But it also, more interestingly, came into view as the symbol of the estranged labour of young factory women – who were 'plugged into' the assembly line as *Juki lamai, Juki kello* (*Juki* girls) and even as *Juki keli* (*Juki* pieces) (Devanarayana 1997; Lynch 2002; 2007; Hewamanne 2003; 2008; Attanapola 2005).

This intermingling of the brand (identity) *Juki* with these young women's collective identity in wider Sri Lankan society as *ganu lamai* or *kello* (girls), as the nexus of the texts exhibits, is, however, not restricted to everyday utterances in wider Sri Lankan society.

Rather it is manifest in many written texts such as job advertisements, newspaper reportage etc. where the *Juki* sewing machine was promoted, although this manifestation is subtle. These promotions mostly appeared in Sinhala newspapers under the headings of *Juki machine puhunuwa* (*Juki* machine training), *adiewegi Juki machine puhunuwa* (powered *Juki* machine training), *Juki abarthu* (*Juki* vacancies), or similar captions (e.g. *Dinamina* 1979a; *Dinamina* 1979b; *Dinamina* 1979c), because their 'target audience' mainly were Sinhala speaking young rural women (Jayaweera 2002; de Silva 2002; Hewamanne 2003; 2008). These promotions exhibit how these young women's relatively honoured but colloquial identity *ganu lamai* – along with its more literal, formal versions *tharuniyan* (young women), *yauwaniyan* (young women) etc. – in wider Sri Lankan society intermingled and entwined with the brand *Juki* to portray female wage labour in the industry.

A golden opportunity

Nevertheless this intermingling was rather blurred in written-official texts of the industry, particularly in relation to managing labour, even in this period – 1970s. For example, as appeared in a job advertisement tilted 'A golden opportunity':

> A golden opportunity for *tharuniyan* [young women] worried without a job![54]
> Powered *Juki* sewing machine training
> D.I.T. Aftas Institute
> Mechanical training (machine operators) only for *tharunayan* [young men], separate classes.
>
> Source: *Dinamina* (Sinhala daily newspaper) 1979b, 11 August, p. 10.

---

[54] Disregarding the odd nature of the sentences when they appear in English, I offer a 'direct' translation to highlight the original grammatical structure of these Sinhala texts. So rather than transcribing and translating this sentence as 'worried without not having jobs', I transcribe it as 'worried without a job'. It should be noted, however, that even this direct translation does not give a guarantee of the original temperament of the sentence/text (see for critique Spivak 1998; also Johnson 1981).

Such texts, more or less, brought a 'new promise' to young women (*tharuniyan*), 'worried about not having jobs'. But, as this exemplar text exhibits, they are intertwined with *Juki*, the brand of the powered sewing machine. This intermingling which was rather concealed and subtle in these official-written texts was, however, explicit in everyday utterances in the *kalape* in particular and wider society in general during this period. It, as the nexus of the texts embodies, thus led to narrating a pejorative identity of these young women as *Juki lamai, Juki kello* (*Juki* girls) and *Juki keli* (*Juki* pieces) (Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; Lynch 2002; 2007; Hewamanne 2003; 2008; Attanapola 2005). For example as Devanarayana puts it:

> Women workers in FTZs are quite vulnerable once they are out of the factories or boarding places. People use degrading terms such as "Juki Pieces" [*Juki keli*] and "Zone Bits" [*kalape badu* – zone commodities/goods] to refer to women workers. (1997: 19)

Thus the promise that these texts brought and the opportunity that they offered was not 'golden' as such. Rather they not only recounted the interplay between the brand (identity) *Juki* and the workers' collective identity as *ganu lamai* (young women or girls) or *tharuniyan* (young women) in wider Sri Lankan society. They also exemplified how these young women, at the very moment the feminization process began, were 'plugged into' seamstress jobs whereas their counterparts, young men (*tharunayan*), as this exemplar text also tells us, were encouraged to be technicians in the industry.

The diploma awarding ceremony

Doing female workers' collective identity as part and parcel of the brand *Juki* – indeed as *Juki lamai* – is, however, not solely an act of the actors in the industry during this period,

the late 1970s. Rather it is a product for which many different social actors in the wider Sri Lankan society as well as in the industry are accountable. However, this doing and hence this interplay between (*ganu*) *lamai* and *Juki* (*lamai*) was always blurred and hidden, particularly when different actors in the industry and wider society gathered together and intermingled to do the identity. For example, consider the following extracts from a supplementary published in a daily Sinhala newspaper to mark the diploma awarding ceremony of a powered sewing machine training institute:

> … I cordially wish this institute to be an academy for *asarana tharuniyan* [helpless young women] in rural and urban areas who are *without jobs* due to lack of professional training.
>
> Wijepala Mendis,
> Minster of Textile Industries.
>
> […]
>
> For a long time, *tharuniyan* [young women] in many places in Sri Lanka found it difficult to secure jobs due to lack of professional training. Running an institute like this to fill that void is a *fortune* of *tharuniyan* [young women] in Sri Lanka.
>
> Lalith Athulathmudali,
> Minister of Trade and Shipping.
>
> Source: *Dinamina* 1979c, 30 August, p. 7 (emphasis mine).

Like the advertisement of the 'golden opportunity' this supplementary also brings a 'promise' to young women (*tharuniyan*) 'without jobs due to lack of professional training'. But, unlike the 'golden opportunity', this text portrays the (potential) workers not as *tharuniyan* (young women) *per se* but as *asarana tharuniyan* (helpless young women) while marking how advocates of the liberal economy of Sri Lanka – politicians of the UNP government – also became narrators of this helpless, feeble identity of the (potential) workers in the industry. Nevertheless the text does not suggest that these young women are

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lamai as such nor deny it. Nor does it disclose the interplay between this helpless, feeble identity of the (potential) workers and the brand/identity *Juki* until its closing part and hence until the actors in the industry itself speak up:

> … more than 750 *tharuniyan* [young women] who obtain Diplomas from our institute wear the triumphant crown of the competency to be employed in the scientific apparel industry while the minds and souls of these *daruwan* [children/daughters] and their parents who are spread across the entire country [Sri Lanka] are healing… During the last six months 370 *tharuniyan* [young women] who have trained in our institute have joined those who find jobs in the sewing section [apparel industry] within a short period of time and they are in the category of *tharuniyan* [young women] who earn a good income… [Thus I am] happy about providing technical skills that are needed for the apparel industry in the Free Trade Zone and on behalf of my institute I thank the *Juki* Corporation in Japan which provides technical cooperation generously.
>
> Patrick Abegunawardena,
> Managing Director [of the Training Institute].
>
> Source: *Dinamina* 1979c, 30 August, p. 7 (emphasis mine).

As this Managing Director suggests the 'helpless' young women (*asarana tharuniyan*) who have 'worried about not having jobs' in the nascent liberalized context are not helpless as such. They are in contrast the diploma holders of the training institute. However, the diploma holders, as the text unfolds, then become *daruwan* (children/daughters) – who are under parents' protection and control – and subsequently (potential) workers who earn a 'good income'. Indeed the identity of the (potential) workers which the reader confronts here oscillates between *tharuniyan* (young women), (potential) workers and *daruwan* (children/daughters). The text thus portrays these young women as feeble children as well as able workers simultaneously. This substitution of one signifier/identity for the other is indeed not a mere replacement of one word for another. Rather "…it is a surplus, a

plenitude enriching another plenitude…" and so is always an appropriation (Derrida 1997: 144; also Spivak 1988a) within which *daruwan* (children/daughters) become workers and vice versa.

Paradoxically enough in this process of supplementation the text also reminds us that the 'worthy cause' of the institute is not just about providing training. It is also a means of fulfilling the desires of the nascent liberal economy – its apparel industry in the FTZ – under the assistance of the *Juki* Corporation. At this point the text, I argue, synthesises its inevitable link with the brand (identity) *Juki* and so 'unveils' the interplay between the residual identities of these young women as *tharuniyan* (young women)*, daruwan* (children/daughters) etc. and their *Juki* identity. In this process the brand *Juki* appears on behalf of these young women's occupational/class identity as (potential) factory workers – its deferred (derogatory) presence, *Juki lamai* – in the industry (see Devanarayana 1997; Lynch 2002; 2007; Hewamanne 2008). This identity nevertheless remains suppressed in the text – through many metaphors, hyperbole etc.; for example 'the triumphant crown of the competency'. This absent presence – of the (*Juki*) *lamai* identity – is thus not the product of chance. Rather, as the nexus of the texts suggests, it is part of the politico-historical forces and processes which have established Sri Lanka's apparel industry in its present temperament (Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; Lynch 2002; 2007; Hewamanne 2003; 2008; Attanapola 2005). Thus the brand/the signifier *Juki,* at the beginning of the industry, not only (dis)appeared through and intermingled with these young (factory) women's collective identity in wider Sri Lankan society as *tharuniyan* (young women)*, yauwaniyan* (young women) or *ganu lamai* (young women or girls). It also, ironically, substituted for (and was substituted by) their estranged labour in the industry as female shopfloor workers.

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The interplay between the brand/identity *Juki* and the workers' collective identity in wider Sri Lankan society as *tharuniyan* (young women) or *ganu lamai* (young women or girls) in this period was thus an everyday social or textual phenomenon. Indeed it was noticeable in many other texts, for example popular *sarala geetha*[55] (simple songs), and even poems and *nisadas* (free verse) that were woven by the workers themselves, perhaps to mark their resistance to their very (non)existence in the industry as *lamai* if not *Juki lamai/kello* (see for example *Vinischaya Karanu Mena* 1999[56]).

The 'Evaporation': Coining 'Feminine Jobs'

However, this interplay between the brand/identity *Juki* and the workers' collective identity in wider Sri Lankan society as *tharuniyan* (young women) or *ganu lamai* (young women or girls) began to fade away in the mid 1980s, particularly in the official-written texts of the industry. For example, as a job vacancy posted in a Sunday Sinhala newspaper embodies:

> Vacancies for *ganu lamai* [girls] in an Apparel Manufacturing Factory
> *Ganu lamai* [girls] who can sew and who can operate D.D.L. 555, Button Attach, Button Holder machines properly.
> *Ganu lamai* [girls] for ironing.

---

[55] During this period many *sarala geetha* (simple songs) that narrate the adverse lives of factory women in the industry emerged. One of these *sarala geetha,* which became very popular in the 1980s, sung by Sunil Edirisinghe, metaphorizes the lives of the factory women as the (*Juki*) machine which they are 'plugged into'. So it asks the worker – and reader – whether they (actually) sew their lives or the garment (which they sew). Another popular *sarala geethaya* sung by a highly regarded singer Gunadasa Kapuge renarrates the 'true' story of a raped and murdered female seamstress in the industry in the Katunayake FTZ during this period. In this song the murdered worker is portrayed as a princess who is asleep pricked by a pin which echoes the princess in *Sleeping Beauty*. The metaphor of the pin in the song – which likens the murdered worker to a princess who sews garments for a low wage – symbolizes the (*Juki*) sewing machine which she worked on.
[56] This text published by a worker-feminist activist group called *Dabindu* Collective in the Katunayake FTZ contains more than forty Sinhala poems and *nisadas* (free verse) written mostly by women factory workers in the apparel industry. The poems and free verse were originally published in *Dabindu* Collective's free circulated newspaper, *Dabindu* (a drop of sweat) during the period from the mid 1980s to the late 1990s. Many of these texts embody how the narrators use the terms *Juki*, *Juki* machine, *lamai*, *ganu lamai* (girls or young women) etc. to portray and even to *un*do women factory workers' very (non)existence in the industry as *lamai*. I articulate my (re)reading of these poems and free verse in more detail in chapter 6.

Asrumkaranniyan[57] [female packing workers] are immediately required.

Come with originals of service certificates between 9 – 12.00 am on working days.

Attractive salary will be paid.

Royal Cristal,

Kelin Weediya [Main Street],

Colombo.

Source: *Silumina* (Sinhala Sunday Newspaper) 1984, 20 October, p. 24.

However, this fading process, as this text embodies, did not efface the *lamai* identity even if *Juki* disappears. Instead it led to some 'feminine' job titles such as *asrumkaraniyan* (female packing workers), perhaps unique to the industry, while rearticulating or persevering the workers' collective identity in wider society as *ganu lamai*. This peculiar trend of doing the workers' identity, which (dis)appeared through official-written texts of the industry, particularly of managing labour such as job advertisements, was evident even in these later official-written texts of (doing) HRM in the industry. In these official-written texts not only the brand *Juki* but also '*ganu lamai*' virtually disappeared, even though shopfloor jobs were still restricted to female labour. For example, as (dis)appears in the following job vacancy:

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[57] Unlike in English, in Sinhala most nouns have a male and a female form. As such, *asrumkaraniyan* here means not packing workers but female packing workers if not 'packing girls'.

VACANCIES IN A GARMENT BUYING OFFICE

A Leading International Sportswear / Outerwear Buying office is seeking the following personnel for its office in Sri Lanka –

1. **MERCHANDISER** –
   With a minimum of three years experience in a garment buying office
   Salary – Rs.240,000/= per annum

2. **QUALITY CONTROLLERS** –
   With three years experience either in a factory or buying office
   Salary – Rs.180,000/= per annum

3. **SECRETARY** –
   Five years experience in the secretarial field and should be able to handle correspondence Independently.
   Salary – Rs. 72,000/= per annum

4. **PATTERN MAKER** –
   With a minimum of five years experience in a garment buying office or factory
   Salary – Rs. 96,000/= per annum

5. **ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT** –
   With knowledge of Accounts.
   Salary – Rs. 60,000/= per annum

6. **SEWING GIRLS FOR THE SAMPLE ROOM** –
   With at least five years experience in a buying office sample room or factory.
   Salary – Rs. 4,500/= per month

ALL ABOVE PERSONNEL WILL RECEIVE AN ATTRACTIVE BONUS, MEDICAL BENEFITS & INSURANCE.

Please forward your applications within seven days from the date of this advertisement with two non-related referees to –

PC 553
C/o Daily News

Source: *Daily News* 1992b, 8 February, p. 18.

As this exemplar text of (doing) HRM embodies, even this systematic-trendy approach to managing employment, HRM, which appeared in the industry in this period did not totally efface the *lamai* identity. Rather while marking all other jobs as 'gender neutral' it, as this text of (doing) HRM tells us, coins a peculiar 'feminine' job title/identity rendering the seamstress' job in the industry as 'sewing girls'; *mahana ganu lamai* if not *mahana lamai* in Sinhala. But this 'newly' coined title/identity does not re-present the mere *ganu lamai*

(girls) identity of the workers. Nor does it portray their wage labour role in the industry *per se*. Instead it merges these identities together and so implies how shopfloor jobs in the industry were still restricted to inexperienced, helpless young women without jobs in this period whereas other positions in the industry emerged somewhat differently. Thus disregarding the language of the texts – Sinhala or English – when it comes to the subject of female shopfloor labour, this labour's collective identity, in the industry continued to (dis)appear as *lamai* even in official-written texts of (doing) HRM in the industry, although this appearance in this period was not explicit as it was in the 1970s and 1980s.

But as HRM gradually established itself in the industry – as a palatable supplement for 'monarchic-type' wage labour relations that appeared and took place mostly under the banner of personnel management (see chapter 2) – it eventually led to a virtual extinction even of this blurry presence of (doing) the *lamai* identity by further 'brushing up' 'feminine' job titles.

Doing HRM – doing *lamai*

Thus in the first decade of the 21st century, employing the term/signifier *lamai* to portray female shopfloor workers' collective identity in the industry in official-written texts of (doing) HRM is virtually absent even in the Katunayake FTZ. Rather these texts, for example job advertisements posted in the *kalape*, coin much more palatable 'feminine' job titles (see photo 1) – a process that began in the 1980s, as the nexus of the texts suggests – or craft and employ 'gender neutral' job titles (see photo 2) as (doing) HRM had begun to do in the 1990s.

Photo 1: A Job for Ability

Source: Fieldwork Data, Avariyawatta Town, Katunayake, August 2007.

Translation:

A Job for Ability, Come and Join Us

Mirai Private Institute's Vacancies for Experienced/Inexperienced *Machine*[58]

Operatorwariyan[59] [Female Machine Operators]

An experienced *Machine Operatorwariyakage* [Female Machine Operator's] initial salary

is Rs. 8,500.00[60]

An inexperienced *Machine Operatorwariyakage* [Female Machine Operator's] initial

salary is Rs. 5,000.00

Attendance allowance[61] is Rs. 1,000.00

Accommodation and transport facilities

Overtimes, Incentives, Bonuses…..

Monthly Income Rs. 16,000.00[62]

Recruitment every day from 8.30 a.m.

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[58] Italicised terms appear in English in the original Sinhala text.
[59] Sinhala feminine noun which has been coined from the English noun operator.
[60] Equal to £45 roughly, according to the exchange rate at the time of writing.
[61] Many apparel manufacturing companies pay a monthly allowance for their shopfloor workers if they come to work without taking any leave.
[62] Equal to £85 roughly.

So rather than using other residual terms/identities such as *lamai*, *ganu lamai* (girls or young women) or *tharuniyan* (young women) new 'feminine' job titles/identities like *Operatorwariya/Operatorwariyan* (Female Machine Operator/s) emerge – through and within official-written texts of (doing) HRM – as palatable and 'ethical' supplements for the term/the identity *lamai*. This dangerous supplement and indeed this doing of female shopfloor workers' collective identity is more subtle when it crafts and so (dis)appears through 'gender neutral' official job titles to signify female shopfloor labour (its collective identity) in the industry, as in the exemplar text (photo 2) below.

Photo 2: This is an Opportunity

Source: Fieldwork Data, Avariyawatta Town, Katunayake, August 2007.

Translation:

Look, Rays of Sun Falling on Youthfulness are for You

If You are the Champion to be a Beloved Member of the Family of Sterling Lanka Apparel

This is an Opportunity [for] (female/ male)

Experienced *Sample Operators*

More than Rs. 18,000.00 monthly salary

Experienced *Screen Printers*

More than Rs. 15,000.00 monthly salary

Experienced *Embroider*[y] *Operators*

More than Rs. 15,000.00 monthly salary

Experienced *Avasan Thathwa Pareekshaka* [Final Quality Checker]

More than Rs. 15,000.00 monthly salary

[…]

Come to the Administrative and Human Resources Section on weekdays from 7.00 am to 7.00 pm with all the certificates

[…]

Sterling Lanka Apparel (Pvt) Ltd.

As in the nascent liberalized context, this job advertisement still brings a 'promise' to young women. However, it neither utters the brand (identity) *Juki* nor embodies the term/signifier *lamai*, *ganu lamai* (young women or girls), *tharuniyan* (young women) etc. Nor does it portray 'helpless' young women 'worried about not having a job'. Instead it coins and so employs – as adapted from the English nouns 'operator', 'printer' etc. – 'gender neutral' official job titles to portray female shopfloor labour and indeed its collective identity in the present-day industry. However, this 'evaporation' of the term/identity *lamai* does not mean doing HRM in the industry totally effaces the *lamai* identity. Rather this absent presence is more palatable, ironic and even poetic than it was either in the industry in its nascent liberalized economic context or even in the 1980s and

1990s. Indeed both photos 1 and 2 as well as photograph 3 which follows portray pictures of young women with (*Juki*) sewing machines or other advanced mechanical apparatuses in the industry and thus invite other young women to join 'promising' jobs with many 'perks' such as attendance allowances, accommodation and transport facilities, bonuses and so forth.

Photo 3: For a New Era

Source: Fieldwork Data, Avariyawatta Town, Katunayake, August 2007.

Translation:

For a New Era…
Come and Join Us
Hirdaramani Group of Companies

Thus this palatable and poetic 'textual strategy' of doing HRM and hence the (apparent) evaporation of the signifier *lamai* – as the signifier par excellence of female shopfloor workers' collective identity in the industry – does not mean that the *lamai* identity is totally effaced. Nor does it indicate that its (deferred) presence is impossible in the present-day

industry. Rather the 'evaporation' is temporary. So the identity is always in a position to come out at the moment its spatiotemporal conditions are fulfilled. For example, as the text (photo 4) titled 'The girls' dormitory' embodies the 'boarding house project' in this apparel manufacturing company in the Katunayake FTZ is neither for *machine operatorwariyan* (female machine operators) nor for women workers. Nor is it for *tharuniyan* (young women) *per se*, but instead it is for 'girls' – (*ganu*) *lamai*.

Photo 4: The Girls' Dormitory

Source: Fieldwork Data, Avariyawatta Town, Katunayake, August 2007.

The 'evaporation' of the *lamai* identity is in fact not its total effacement, but its deferred presence in the industry. Therefore it always appears, disappears, reappears and is always awaiting the next supplement, its deferred presence.

'Local Texts' and the Absent Presence of the *Lamai* Identity

Thus, despite the apparent evaporation of the *lamai* identity in official-written texts of (doing) HRM in the industry since the 1990s, the nexus of the texts embodies the ways in which the identity is variously portrayed and uttered in 'local texts' (of undoing HRM) such as newspaper reportage, teledramas, films, poems and *nisadas* (free verse) and the like woven and interwoven in this period. In this period not only the phenomenon of HRM, as we have seen it, emerged or appeared in the industry, but also the UNP Government, more specifically former President Ranasinghe Premadasa, was depicted as attempting to reform the industry (*Daily News* 1992c; Lynch 2007).

Journalistic re-presentation of (un)doing *lamai*

As far as local texts are concerned doing *lamai* identity is especially vivid in newspaper reportage on the industry and the Katunayake FTZ (e.g. *Sunday Island* 1991; *The Island* 1991). This reportage not only tells us about the ways in which different social actors gathered together and intermingled to do and narrate the *lamai* identity. They also, more interestingly, show how some attempt to 'unveil' 'unrealized' facets of the industry, particularly in the Katunayake FTZ, also tended to restore the *lamai* identity itself. Consider the report titled 'Shocking goings on at FTZ' published in a Sunday English newspaper, *Sunday Island*, for example:[63]

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[63] This report which articulates adverse living conditions of the women factory workers in the Katunayake FTZ is based on a socio-economic survey carried out by a professor at a Sri Lankan university.

…young *working girls* are seen dancing around intoxicated with liquor [at musical evenings],[64] their boyfriends usually providing intoxicants. Many *girls* indulge in sex not only inside the enclosed area but also even along by ways.

[…]

They [boarding houses] resemble [plantation] estate line rooms of the past[,] the only difference being that a room of 10 x 8, 10 x 9 [feet] houses ten or more *female workers*.

[…]

The fact that most of the *women workers* had to use the toilet [at the boarding house] at the same time to get ready for work made this problem [of inadequate toilet facilities] more acute.

Source: *Sunday Island* 1991, 15 December, pp. 1 and 3 (emphasis mine).

At the very beginning this text narrates the 'shocking' behaviour of 'girls' or 'working girls' in the Katunayake FTZ. The text employs the colloquial term girls or (*ganu*) *lamai* (in Sinhala) to mark the workers' very (non)existence in the zone – their very poor living conditions in the boarding houses. In this process the text tells us that these girls are also 'female' or 'women workers' in the zone. So the same 'intoxicated girls', as the text unfolds, become (mature) 'women workers'. Thus the text, on the one hand, marks the presence of the *lamai* identity which began to fade away in official-written texts of (doing) HRM in this period. On the other hand, it neither suggests that these young women – their collective identity – are *lamai* as such, nor denies it. Instead it keeps the identity unfinished, as something which oscillates between working girls, girls, female workers and women

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[64] In the Katunayake FTZ many musical evenings which are organized by factories in the zone or any other organizations were common during this period. The social image of these events is, however, mostly negative, as they tend to negate not only widely accepted cultural values and norms but also dominant discourses of (Sinhala-Buddhist) womanhood in Sri Lanka (see for example Hewamanne 2008).

workers and so, always awaiting the next supplement – its deferred (derogated) presence in the industry. Indeed as this exemplar text unfolds we see the following:

> The change of behaviour of *girls* [from the villages] takes 3-6 months after they come to the zone. The reason for the change appears to be the gradual disappearance of the *bond between parents and children*. During the probationary period *workers* get hardly any opportunity to visit their parents [in the villages].
>
> […]
>
> Often the *working girls* are jeered at as "juki keli" [*Juki* pieces] in buses and public places [in the zone].
>
> The *girls* themselves have realized the lowly position they are accorded in the wider society. They also know that in a such situation finding a decent marriage partner is quite [a] Herculean task.
>
> Source: *Sunday Island* 1991, 15 December, pp. 1 and 3 (emphasis mine).

Thus the reader who confronts this text – and the women workers it depicts – realizes that the possibility of portraying these women's identity as workers as such, its persistence, in the industry is ephemeral. Their collective identity in the industry is always constrained by and emerging from the interplay between their collective identity as *ganu lamai* in wider Sri Lankan society, their family bondage as children (*lamai/daruwo*) and their inevitable positioning in the industry as estranged labour 'plugged into' powered sewing machines, chiefly the *Juki*. Thus the (apparent) evaporation of the *lamai* identity in official-written texts of (doing) HRM in the industry in this period such as job advertisements is, as we have already seen it, not total effacement of the *lamai* identity. Rather it is just a temporary delay – the deferred presence of the identity as *Juki keli* (*Juki* pieces). Thus what official-written texts of (doing) HRM negate is, I suggest, not the identity *per se*, but their own silence on this (deferred) presence of the identity as *Juki lamai* if not *keli* (pieces) – something official-written texts of (doing) HRM have 'never said' or are reluctant to say

and accept, perhaps due to the 'ethical' exterior of doing HRM. Therefore I argue that this 'never said' is always there in these texts just as it is in the report we have just seen "… [as] a voice as silent as a breath, a writing that is merely the hollow of its own mark", as Foucault (1972: 25) suggests.

Thus as recently as 2000 – the period in which (doing) the *lamai* identity, as we have already seen, virtually evaporated in official-written texts of (doing) HRM – the signifier/identity *lamai* continues to (dis)appear in many other texts, particularly in newspaper reportage (e.g. Fernando 2001; Samaraweera 2006; *The Island* 2007; *Lankadeepa* 2007) even under captions such as 'Garment girls say no to harassment' (Samaraweera 2006). For example, a report that narrates a female shopfloor worker in the Katunayake FTZ, who was allegedly raped and killed by a doctor while she was in hospital, suggests:

> A doctor attached to the Negombo Hospital[65] has been arrested in connection with the death of one of his patients, a 22-year-old *girl* working at the Katunayake Free Trade Zone.
> The *girl*, Chamila Dissanayake, had visited the suspect doctor's clinic on the third floor of the Hospital on Monday morning for treatment of a chest abscess.
>
> Source: *The Island* (online edition) 2007, 14 November, (emphasis mine).

The patient whom the reader encounters in this text is not a 'female worker' nor a 'victim' *per se* but a 'girl' who works in the Katunayake FTZ. The text thus tends to assign a 'girlish' identity to the victim yet the culprit remains as an anonymous doctor. This girlish

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[65] The nearest district hospital to the Katunayake FTZ.

if not *lamai* identity, as the text suggests, is not that of the innocent, relatively honoured version as it appears in wider Sri Lankan society. It is, I argue, not the identity of *ganu lamaya* (young woman or girl), but one which derives from the workers' collective identity as *lamai* in the 'notorious' Katunayake FTZ – which is known as *sthripura* (the 'city of women' if not 'of easy women') or *vesa kalape* (zone of whores) (Fernando 2001; Lynch 2002; 2007; Hewamanne 2003; 2008) – where 'girls' indulge in sex, are raped and subsequently are even murdered (see for example *Sunday Island* 1991; Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; Attanapola 2005). Like this text, this girlish identity is thus interdiscursive and intertextual. It emerges within the nexus of the texts and, more interestingly, even as part and parcel of the nature of the diagnosis – a chest abscess.[66] Thus it goes without saying who the 'real' victim is – was the (respected) doctor who was perhaps *seduced* by this girl from the 'notorious' Katunayake FTZ indulging in sex while the diagnosis was carried out? After all as Calás and Smircich remind us, "One who seduces is a seductress: a female seducer. Seductors (male seducers) no longer exist. Thus … only a woman can be a "seductress"" (1991: 573).

However, even in this unsympathetic socio-organizational con-text, in which the female shopfloor worker (and indeed her identity) becomes *lamai*, there are some counter-narratives (see for example *Dabindu* 2007b; *Lankadeepa* 2007). This same incident as reported in *Lankadeepa* – a Sinhala daily newspaper – goes beyond the victim's collective

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[66] In Sri Lankan society these kinds of diagnoses are still considered strictly private matters. For example, when a pregnant woman goes to see a doctor, she is usually accompanied by an adult woman such as her mother or her husband's mother.

identity as 'young woman' (*tharuniya*) and, consequently, insists to the reader that she is a worker or paid labourer in the apparel industry but *not* a girl/*lamaya*:

> Yesterday (13)[67] morning the Negombo Police have taken into custody a doctor attached to [the Negombo District] hospital to inquire into an incident where a 23 year old *tharuniyaka* [young woman] who came to get treatment to a medical clinic of the Negombo District Hospital was raped and killed by carrying [her] to a room on the sixth floor and subsequently pushing [her] off that floor. The victim called Dissanayake Mudiyanselage Chamila Dissanayake is *angalum sevikavak* [an apparel (manufacturing) worker] in the Katunayake Free Trade Zone.
>
> Source: *Lankadeepa* (online edition) 2007, 14 November.

Thus the impossibility of (re)narration of these young women's collective identity as wage labourers or proletarian women in the Global South (see Perera 2008), as this text tells us, also appears as its possibility. So the becoming of the *lamai* identity does not imply that undoing the identity is impossible. Instead it is, as Derrida (1993; also 1988b; Jones 2003; Wang 2005) tells us, what makes this undoing possible. Indeed this impossibility is also its possibility. Nevertheless it does not guarantee the total effacement of the *lamai* identity and so does not prevent its becoming. Thus the term/identity *lamai* in the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry, I suggest, does not signify a fixed meaning or singular subject. On the contrary it is fragmented, always remains unfinished and is always awaiting the next supplement. This nature of (doing) the *lamai* identity is equally vivid in Sri Lankan teledramas and other cinematic texts.

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[67] 13th November 2007.

Cinematic (re)narration of the *lamai* identity

After economic liberalization, particularly during the mid 1980s, teledramas became an essential part of the everyday life of ordinary men, women and children in Sri Lanka, mainly in low income and middle income families. These cinematic texts, as a whole, not only capture the prime time of almost all the television channels in Sri Lanka but also have taken socio-emotional relations of these ordinary people into their custody. They narrate, renarrate and portray the everyday social affairs of these ordinary people and so are influential in aligning their collective psyche.

Further a considerable number of cinematic texts (e.g. *Hiruta Muwaven* 1989; *Purahanda Kaluwara* 1997; *Kinihiriya Mal* 2000; *Sulang Kirilli* 2002; *Grahanaya* 2005) (re)narrate and portray the everyday realities of female shopfloor workers in the apparel industry – particularly in the Katunayake FTZ – who are the daughters, relatives, neighbours, boarders etc. of the viewing families, ordinary men and women. Indeed they articulate – perhaps by peeling off their own exterior and by going beyond their plots – these workers' very (non)existence in the industry as *lamai*. Also they are keen to (re)narrate different social actors' involvement in doing the *lamai* identity. So the cinematic texts are a key part of the nexus of the texts which may even exceed the limits of other local texts (*viz.* newspaper reportage, poems, songs etc.) due to their unique cinematic form(s). Therefore, the cinematic texts (*viz. Grahanaya, Sulang Kirilli* and *Kinihiriya Mal*), and my rereading of them, play a key role in this chapter as far as synthesizing a genealogical note of and indeed *re*narrating (doing) the *lamai* identity is concerned.

Grahanaya (Magnetism/Eclipse)

The story of *Grahanaya* (2005), a Sinhala teledrama, is all about the love story of a young couple. A girl named Trilishiya is a shopfloor worker in an apparel printing factory in the Katunayake FTZ. She is Sinhala-Catholic, the eldest child in a poor fishing family. Trilishiya lives in a crowded boarding house in the zone. Like many of her colleagues, she wants to share the economic burden of her family. She falls in love with a boy named Bandara who she meets in the zone. Bandara is an apprentice mechanic in a nearby garage. He is Sinhala-Buddhist, the younger child of a 'respectable' family from 'up-country'. [68]

One day when Trilishiya and Bandara are on a beach at twilight the police detain the couple. Subsequently they appear before the court and are charged with indecent behaviour in a public place.[69] All tragedies begin thereafter. Trilishiya is compelled to give up her job by her father as she has brought shame to the family. This 'indecent' behaviour also brings shame to Bandara's family. So he too gives up his job. Nevertheless the court holds that the couple is innocent.

However, eventually Trilishiya returns to the factory due to the economic hardship of her family. At this point the owner of the factory (with the support of the female floor manager) attempts to trap her to fulfil his sexual desires. Although Trilishiya is able to escape from

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[68] These identities – Sinhala-Buddhist, Sinhala-Catholic, 'up-country' etc. – which were constructed mainly during and under the British colonial era of the country – are still influential, especially when marriage decisions are taken. The identity of Sinhala-Buddhist youth from 'up-country' – the central highlands, mainly of Kandy, the last Kingdom of Sri Lanka – is always assigned a place in the upper social strata vis-à-vis the identity of Sinhala-Catholic youth from a fishing village or 'low-country' – the southern part of Sri Lanka, including Colombo. In one scene of *Grahanaya* this hard reality comes out as Bandara's friend in his garage reminds him of the impossibility of him marrying Trilishiya.

[69] In Sri Lanka, making love in public places is an offence according to the Police Ordinance No. 16 of 1865 (as amended).

this trap and then goes home she has to return to the factory again due to the family's ongoing deprivation. Once she returns she gradually becomes a sexual object for the factory owner while Bandara moves to a job in Japan. As a result she gives birth to an 'illegitimate' child whose father is said to be the factory owner. Now she is running her own small tailoring shop, having given up the factory job. The last episode reaches a pinnacle in a scene where Trilishiya is taken into police custody after an unsuccessful attempt to stab the factory owner during a procession that is organized to mark his achievements in the apparel business.

The text (re)narrates many facets of women's lives in Sri Lanka's apparel industry, particularly in the Katunayake FTZ, as part and parcel of this tragic love story. It intermingles and entwines with a variety of other texts in and about the industry and hence embodies the multiple voices of different social actors, particularly in the zone. Thus, as the text narrates different calamities, more specifically Trilishiya's, the reader who faces the text experiences the ways in which these actors gather together and intermingle to do, narrate and restore Trilishiya's identity as *lamaya* – the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers – along with her other residual/relational identities such as a 'young woman' and a 'Sinhala (Catholic) girl' in Sri Lankan society, an 'elder daughter' of a poor fishing family, and a 'female shopfloor worker' in the apparel industry in the zone. This doing of Trilishiya's *lamai* identity emerges at the very movement she appears on her factory floor.

The puzzle

At the beginning of the first episode of *Grahanaya* we confront everyday chores and routines on a busy morning at Trilishiya's boarding house. Two female workers who have

just arrived after their night-shift are laying out their sleeping mats. Another is lying in bed. She is suffering from a fever, so is unable to go to work. While inquiring about the well-being of her sick boarding mate Trilishiya is getting ready to go to work. Another mate[70] is also getting ready.

Following this opening scene we enter Trilishiya's factory floor, a noisy congested place, where a middle-aged woman dressed in *sariya*[71] is giving instructions and orders to busy young female workers by using their names. She, the centre of the scene, is the floor manager and hence is depicted as commanding. Unlike the manager the shopfloor workers, the periphery of the scene, look tired. They are dressed in gowns or jackets and skirts. Their outfits are covered by the dirt of the colours which they use to print the apparel.

From the first, then, those who we encounter as young women in the boarding house and subsequently as shopfloor workers in the factory are poor, sick, tired, dirty and so on. Thus the text, at its beginning, narrates female shopfloor workers' everyday adverse living conditions and economic circumstances in the zone. It also highlights their age, healthiness, mood, cleanliness etc. to distinguish them from others in the zone, particularly the floor manager. As such even the dress code on the factory floor appears as a palatable textual means that highlights the workers' peripheral role on the floor, the centre of which is the

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[70] Even though this boarding mate is a shopfloor worker in the zone she is also a quasi-prostitute, as the text later tells us, mainly in the later episodes. She also has a child who is looked after by her mother. Nevertheless this is not known by her work colleagues and boarding house mates.

[71] *Sariya* is traditional dress for women in many South Asian countries, particularly in India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh. It is also regarded as the ideal decent dress for women in Sri Lanka (see Jayawardena 2000; Lynch 2007; Hewamanne 2008). This dress code – managers/supervisors are in *sarees* and workers are in gowns or in jackets/t-shirts and skirts or perhaps jeans – is common practice in the industry. For female shopfloor workers to wear *sarees* is technically impossible due to the nature of their work and culturally unacceptable in the factory milieu.

manager. Nevertheless this centre (of the text), as Derrida (1978: 280) reminds us "…[has] no natural site… it … [is] not a fixed locus but a function, a sort of nonlocus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions…[come] into play". Indeed portraying the manager in *sariya* and workers in gowns or jackets and skirts is not a mere custom of the work milieu. Rather *sariya* in this con-text especially portrays the mature and 'decent' identity of the manager as the outfit is regarded as the ideal costume for 'low-country' women in Sri Lanka (Jayawardena 2000; Hewamanne 2003; 2008; Lynch 2007). Thus the text not only embodies the tension or interplay between its centre – the manager – and the periphery – the workers – but also, more importantly, reminds the reader of its intertextual nature.

In this context within which the reader perceives if not is directed to perceive the shopfloor workers in a peripheral way, the first encounter between Trilishiya – who appears as a newcomer – and her manager emerges:[72]

> **Manager:** *Lamaya*, what did you say as your hometown?[73]
> **Trilishiya:** Wennapuwa,[74] *Madam*.[75]
> **Manager:** Who are in your family?
> **Trilishiya:** Two younger brothers, younger sister, mother, [and] father.
> **Manager:** What does your father do?
> **Trilishiya:** A fisherman.
> **Manager:** So there may be lots of economic hardship in [your] home.

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[72] In my reading of cinematic texts I do not strictly follow the sequential or chronological order of scenes. Rather I align this order, more or less, in relation to my reading of the texts.

[73] In Sinhala, the grammatical structures of spoken and written sentences are different (see Disanayaka 1998). So disregarding the odd nature of the sentences when they appear in English, I offer a 'direct' translation to highlight the original grammatical structure of the sentences which are in spoken Sinhala. Thus rather than transcribing and translating this sentence as 'what is your hometown?' or 'where are you from?', for example, I transcribe the sentence as 'what did you say as your hometown?' It should be noted, however, that even this direct translation does not give a guarantee of the original temperament of the sentences in spoken Sinhala.

[74] A coastal village in the North Western Province in Sri Lanka.

[75] Except what I use italics to denote Sinhala, the italicized words are in English in the original Sinhala text. I continue this italicization throughout the chapter.

Trilishiya: Yes *Madam*.

This encounter between the manager and Trilishiya appears to be a rather informal 'induction interview', because Trilishiya is still naïve about the factory as well as its members. So the manager wants to familiarize herself with this newcomer. Despite the nature of the encounter, rather than asking her name, the manager enquires about Trilishiya's family background by addressing her as *lamaya*. Thus from her very first appearance on the factory floor the newcomer's proper name, Trilishiya, disappears and hence her common identity as *lamaya/lamai* – which official-written texts of (doing) HRM in the industry, as we have seen, is eager to efface – comes out.

This utterance and hence this substitution might puzzle the reader, particularly when s/he gets to know that Trilishiya, the female shopfloor worker – her identity – is a *ganu lamaya* (young woman or girl) in wider Sri Lankan society, despite her adult wage labour role in the industry. The text remains silent about whether this effacement of her proper name and so this substitution – is due to Trilishiya's common identity as *ganu lamaya* (young woman or girl) in wider Sri Lankan society or to any other reason. Nor does the text tell us why this (*ganu*) *lamai* identity remains uninterrupted even when she becomes a wage labourer. Rather it tends to embody how Trilishiya, the female shopfloor worker, is supposed to be *lamaya* whereas the manager, the middle-aged and middle-class woman, is playing the adult role, despite their 'common' gender identity as women in the apparel industry. Thus, despite this silence of the exterior of the text, its interior, I argue, implies that this 'common' gender (identity) is not the sole 'thing' that narrates Trilishiya's identity as *lamaya*/*lamai* on the factory floor. Rather it might be anything else, perhaps especially the

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interplay between Trilishiya's gender identity and other axes of power relations, particularly her class/occupation – its collective identity – as some researchers point out (see Butler 1990; Collinson 1992; Hall et al. 2007).

As the text unfolds the reader's (re)production of the text and hence of Trilishiya's identity as *lamaya/lamai* is further interrupted by this blurry nature of her (collective) identity in the industry as it appears or is uttered particularly in the non-work milieu. Now it is a sunny day. Outside the court, Trilishiya's father and mother want to thank the defence lawyer who has appeared in Trilishiya's case without a fee. The lawyer, the centre of the scene, is a middle-aged woman. She wears a white *sariya* – the generally accepted professional dress of women lawyers in Sri Lanka – and is in a hurry. Her accent and appearance embody that she is from the upper middle class. The outfits, appearance and bodily gestures of Trilishiya (who is in a gown) and her mother and father manifest not only their class background but also how they are foreign to this place.

> **Father:** *Madam*, I can't believe this help [appearing without a fee].
> **Lawyer:** At last moment this *lamayage* [girl's] *Madam* [the Floor Manager] has
>   assigned me this case. [Otherwise] this is not a difficult case. But this is not good for
>   your future, *lamaya*. It is true, *lamaya*, that you were released. But it was due to [my]
>   legal arguments. Don't forget, *lamaya*, that you were taken into [police] custody
>   while you are on the beach with a young man.
> **Father:** Now listen to that, *duwe* [daughter]!

Outside the court, like on the factory floor, Trilishiya remains as *lamaya* while the lawyer, the middle-aged and middle-class woman, becomes (another) Madam. The lawyer repeatedly utters the term *lamaya* to address and to refer to Trilishiya and her conduct. The lawyer also locates, more interestingly, Trilishiya's case and hence her (mis)conduct

outside or beyond the law. So she refers to the socially accepted (and rejected) behaviour of young women in Sri Lankan society and, consequently, tends to reaffirm the dominant discourses on and about (ideal) womanhood – 'Sinhala-Buddhist' woman who was constructed in the context of colonial Sri Lanka (Ceylon) by the revivalists as part and parcel of their struggle with the British colonial rulers (Jayawardena 1991; 2000; Lynch 2007; Hewamanne 2008). However, this reaffirmation of ideal womanhood, which is chiefly petty bourgeois, is also endorsed by Trilishiya's father, disregarding his own class and religious affiliation as a Roman Catholic fisherman. Thus doing Trilishiya's *lamai* identity, as the text reminds us, is not solely the act of the actors in the apparel industry. Instead it takes place in a rather complex interdiscursive or intertextual sphere within which multiple actors gather together and intermingle to do, narrate and to restore the identity.

Throughout this doing of her (gender) identity Trilishiya herself remains silent while the lawyer plays an active, 'paternal'[76] role, despite Trilishiya's adult wage labour role in the industry. But the text doesn't tell us why Trilishiya is supposed to play the passive role and hence why she does not resist. Rather it encourages the reader to believe that this utterance or doing is an 'innocent', general(ized) practice, because Trilishiya, despite her wage labour role in the apparel industry, is a young woman – *ganu lamaya* – in wider Sri Lankan society. However, this undecidability of the text vis-à-vis (doing) the *lamai* identity, I argue, does not prevent us undoing the identity. Instead it opens up a passage for us to dissect why Trilishiya's identity as *lamaya* – her *lamai* identity – remains uninterrupted

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[76] Here I use the term 'paternal' instead 'maternal' to emphasise control and the instructive aspects of the lawyer's role, because the maternal (*maththruthwaya*) role in Sri Lankan society primarily goes with nurture and affection rather than control.

while other middle-aged and middle-class women whom she encounters become 'Madams'. Indeed it persuades us to explore what links Trilishiya to her collective identity as *lamaya/lamai* in and outside the apparel industry which tends to subordinate her wage labour role as a proletarian woman in this localized global factory floor.

The end of the puzzle – the beginning of the play

However, this passage – which allow us dissect and problematizes Trilishiya's *lamai* identity – is not straightforward. Thus, as the text unfolds, the reader is exposed to further puzzles about (doing) the *lamai* identity. We are in the fourteenth episode of Grahanaya. Trilishiya, who gives up her job due to the factory owner's attempt to rape her, once again comes to find a job in the factory mainly due to her father having lost his fishing job. We enter the manager's office. She is sitting comfortably on her office chair while Trilishiya comes in. Trilishiya looks hesitant and worn out.

> **Trilishiya:** *Madam.*
>
> **Manager:** Are you Trilishiya, *lamaya*? You look very worn out! What has happened to this *kella* [girl] who used to look like a doll? That is what happens when you disobediently give up your job and go home. It is when you are at home that you, *lamaya*, realise the value of a job! Have you come to ask the job back? We hire only the number of *lamai* we need for the factory. We have got a person for you *lamayage* [girl's] vacancy those days [since you left the job] itself.

As in other encounters in which Trilishiya plays the role of *lamaya* (little one) here as well the manager's role emerges as mature and paternal while Trilishiya remains silent. Here Trilishiya is variously portrayed. In fact, the manager first utters the proper name of this ex-shopfloor worker – Trilishiya. This is, however, then substituted by the term/signifier *lamaya* and subsequently by the colloquialism *kella* (girl) as the manager interchangeably

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uses these relational terms to address and to refer to Trilishiya and her colleagues in the factory. In this language game Trilishiya also becomes a worn out (unemployed) woman who used to look like a doll. So the text reminds us that this language game and indeed this supplementation is not a neutral or innocent act. Nor is it mere substitution of one signifier for another. Rather it is a process which adds to and so appropriates her identity (Spivak 1988a; Derrida 1997).

On the other hand, the text tends to reveal, in this process of supplementation, the subtle apparatuses which links Trilishiya to her uninterrupted collective identity as *lamaya/lamai* when the manager utters 'We *hire* only the number of *lamai we need for the factory*' and subsequently 'We have got *a person for you lamayage* (girl's) *vacancy…*'. These utterances appear as part and parcel of the apparatuses of (doing) HRM, for example, recruitment, and so through the deceiving textual form of (doing) HRM in the industry. Here then the reader realizes that the appearance of this common name *lamaya/lamai* to signify Trilishiya, the female shopfloor worker, since her (dis)appearance on the factory floor is not merely due to her common (gender) identity as a *ganu lamaya* (young woman or girl) in wider Sri Lankan society. Instead it is an outcome or surplus which emerges from the complex interplay between her gender identity as *ganu lamaya* in wider Sri Lankan society with her class/occupational identity as a wage labourer in the industry which nevertheless remains suppressed in official-written texts of (doing) HRM in the industry, as we have seen. This interplay between gender and class (see Butler 1990; Collinson 1992; Hall et al. 2007) and hence this 'truth' of Trilishiya's identity is, however, also its own puzzle which maintains the persistent ambiguity of her identity.

Back to the puzzle (again)

As the reader has already experienced the term/signifier *lamaya/lamai*, on the one hand, signifies Trilishiya's identity in the industry. On the other hand, it denotes her *ganu lamai* identity in wider Sri Lankan society, even though they are not entirely separable from one other. So, as the text unfolds, the reader encounters (his/her realization of *this* truth of) Trilishiya's identity as always remains unfinished, awaiting the next supplement, as it oscillates from one con-text to another.

Now we are at Trilishiya's boarding house. Her mother and sister have come to see her, after she has rejoined the factory. They are sitting on a bed and drinking tea. One of her friends (who has served the tea) is also in the house while Trilishiya comes in.

> **Trilishiya:** Mother, have you been here long?
> **Friend:** When I came back from work [the factory] these two were waiting the outside. At first glance, I realised [that they were] Trilishiya's mother and sister.
> **Mother:** Yes *duwe* [daughter], even though we said no, this *lamaya* rushed to the *kadeta* [small shop], [and] bought buns and tea for us.
> **Friend:** That's nothing! You can have some dinner with us and stay here tonight.
> **Mother:** Can't do that, *lamaya*, we have to be home at whatever time tonight. Really, where do you *lamai* cook? Where is the kitchen?
> **Friend:** Oh no! Please don't go to the kitchen! [The friend is embarrassed to show the poor condition of their kitchen].

In this encounter Trilishiya's mother utters the terms *lamaya/lamai* to address Trilishiya's friend and to refer to her boarding mates as a whole. The term here, however, denotes neither her/their *lamai* identity in the industry nor their *ganu lamai* identity in wider Sri Lankan society. Rather, unlike in other encounters, the terms *lamaya* and *lamai* in this con-text substitute for the term 'daughter(s)'. This utterance is indeed more nurturing and caring

rather than paternalist and controlling. As such, the reader's realization of the 'truth' of Trilishiya's collective identity as *lamaya*/*lamai* in the industry is once again interrupted by the shifting and fragmented nature of the identity itself. So this interplay between gender and class is not a simple, straightforward one. Indeed, as Butler points out, "It would be wrong to assume in advance that there is a category of "women" that simply needs to be filled in with various components of race, class, age, ethnicity, and sexuality in order to become complete" (1990: 20-21). So the text reminds us that the 'collective signature' of *lamai* is not something fixed or fixable signifier that signifies this interplay. On the contrary it is a 'thing' which is done, narrated, filled, undone and indeed which is always in the process of supplementation.

The quandary

This becoming of Trilishiya's collective identity as *lamaya/lamai* is also in a position to surpass its denotative meaning(s) – which intrinsically embodies, more or less, the passive, submissive and immature being of those who are subject to its reference and utterance. As such, as narrated in the first episode of *Grahanaya*, this same signifier signifies not only passivity, but also the possibility of rupturing this passivity as it oscillates from one context to another.

We are now at Trilishiya's factory. The manager invites Trilishiya to her office. She is sitting comfortably while Trilishiya is standing in front of the manager's desk.

> **Manager:** Come in *lamaya*. *Lamaya*, you have a nice face. Attractive *lamaya* like you can live very comfortably. *Lamaya*, don't you like to live by dressing well, eating well and by helping to your family? I can help you, *lamaya*. *Lamaya*, tell me whether you like or not?

> **Trilishiya:** Please *Madam*, may I go?

This encounter, as the exterior of the text narrates, manifests the ways in which the manager attempts to 'seduce' Trilishiya to trap her to fulfil the factory owner's sexual desires. So the manager uses all of her charms, lays emphasis on Trilishiya's economic circumstances and plays her usual paternal role. Trilishiya, like in many other encounters, plays the passive (childlike) role and remains silent except when she finally speaks up. Despite this exterior, the interior of the text, I argue, implies Trilishiya's potential power – her highly regarded 'feminine' attractiveness in the industry as well as in wider Sri Lankan society – which (dis)appears as part and parcel of the manager's (fake) sympathy about Trilishiya's 'helpless' position, her very (non)existence in the industry. Thus it reminds the reader that this 'helplessness' – as *lamaya* – as well as potential 'power' are not 'things' which exist separately from her identity as *lamaya*/*lamai* (or vice versa) in the industry, but are inextricable facets of the identity itself.

Thus Trilishiya's very (non)existence in the industry as *lamaya* – an 'attractive' *lamaya* – not only implies her 'helpless' position in the industry. It also marks her potential power – her 'feminine' attractiveness or 'attractive' *lamai* identity. Thus when Trilishiya finally breaks her own silence – 'Please *Madam*, may I go?' – it does not imply a weak request, as the exterior of the text is eager to tell us. Rather it is ironic and hence marks her displeasure about this 'offer'. Indeed it manifests Trilishiya's realization of her own (potential) 'power', which can be traded upon to 'emancipate' her family as well as herself, if Trilishiya is willing to do so.

But this 'power' is paradoxical, because being a mere female shopfloor worker – *lamaya*/*lamai* – in the industry, Trilishiya is not able to 'emancipate' herself and her family. So she has to utilize her (socially constructed) feminine attractiveness or attractive *lamai* identity. So the reader gets to know that this borderline between 'powerfulness' and 'powerlessness' – the centre and periphery, (and hence) this problematic closure is not fixed since this powerfulness/this centre, as we have already seen, has no natural site, is not a fixed locus but a function, a sort of nonlocus (Derrida 1978: 280). It is in fact not a holy sphere which is fixed and timeless. Rather it is a fragile, ruined landscape in which sign-substitutions take place and so is always in a position to be ruptured and substituted (Derrida 1978; 1993). Therefore, what we encounter as Trilishiya's collective identity as *lamaya/lamai* in the industry is, I argue, a 'double bind' – she is able as well as feeble, both of which rely upon each other, which Derrida calls "…the singular artefact of a blade and a knot" (1988b: 607).

This double-bind or aporia of Trilishiya's identity is especially vivid, when it (dis)appears through or is substituted by other relational signifiers and hence residual identities such as *kella* (girl), as we have already experienced in the encounter between Trilishiya and her manager when Trilishiya comes to rejoin the factory.

The signifier kella and its other(s)

Now we are in the garden of Trilishiya's home. Her mother is drawing water from the garden well. At this point Trilishiya has given up her job due to the factory owners' attempt to rape her. Her mother gets a surprise when she sees Trilishiya is rushing to get home.

> **Mother:** *Lamaya* why are you here this untimely hours? Don't you have work today? Wait for a moment *kelle* [girl/oh girl], please stop to ask what has happened [to you]? Why are you so morose? What has happened, *duwe* [daughter]?
>
> **Trilishiya:** I have resigned from that place [the factory].

In this encounter the mother's utterance of the term *lamaya* is substituted by the colloquial signifier *kelle* (girl) and subsequently by *duwe* (daughter). Unlike the manager's utterance of *kella* – which appears as part of her fake affection and friendliness – here it emerges as part of the mother's surprise, emotion and deep motherly affection. The signifier *kella*, in this context, thus embodies neither (fake) friendliness as such nor its rather pejorative meaning in wider Sri Lankan society, but care and affection. In fact here it tends to signify Trilishiya's daughter/child identity that marks the rupture of the (potential) power of her feminine attractiveness. Thus the young woman (her identity) whom the reader encounters in this family milieu is not a powerful woman but a helpless and feeble daughter who seeks parental affection and protection. But this substitution, this marker, tends to erase what it has already marked and traced. As the deep interior of the text signals, and the reader knows, this feeble daughter is the same one who has rebelliously resigned from her job. Thus, as the text unfolds, the reader begins to realize that Trilishiya's feebleness here is also ephemeral.

We move to the interval of the court hearing. Bandara, his mother, father and a friend are having lunch at a small hotel. Within a few seconds Bandara and his friend leave the lunch table. Bandara's mother and father are still having their meal. They are worried about the situation.

> **Father:** As a person who reads horoscopes of everyone in the village to foresee their misfortune, I was unable to foresee my own *daruwage* [child/son's] misfortune**.**

> **Mother:** That was not a misfortune. That *noasandala kella* [immoral girl] put our *daruwa* [son/child] in trouble.

In this encounter, while Trilishiya's lover Bandara's identity emerges as *daruwa* (child or son)*,* Trilishiya, the same young woman whom the reader has already confronted as a 'helpless' daughter/girl in her family milieu, becomes a *noasandala kella* (immoral girl). So the text contrasts Trilishiya to her lover, the 'innocent' *daruwa* (child or son), and tells us that she is no longer a feeble and innocent girl/daughter but an evil and powerful young woman who 'seduces' and puts 'inexperienced' young men in trouble (Calás and Smircich 1991). This same signifier *kella* in this con-text – especially when appearing with adjectives such as 'immoral' – thus implies not only the contextual character of this text (see Colebrook and McHoul 1996) and so the signifier *kella* itself. It also, more importantly, embodies how the signifier tends to bring back its deferred (derogated) presence – *garment* or *Juki kello* – particularly in the con-text of the Katunayake FTZ (Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; Lynch 2002; 2007; Hewamanne 2003; 2008; Attanapola 2005). So its *dis*appearance in the family milieu, as the reader has already experienced, is temporary.

However, portraying Trilishiya, her identity, as evil and powerful is also interrupted as this signifier *kella* oscillates from one con-text to another. So this same evil girl is returned to her (original) helpless and innocent position as in the following scene. We are now at Bandara's garage. Bandara's friend enters its equipment room while Bandara is lying on a table.

> **Bandara:** My worry is about Trilishiya. She even refused to come [to go to the beach]. [She] went because of my persuasion. It's a pity! *Asarana kella* [helpless girl]!

Friend: What is happening now?

This encounter seems to narrate Bandara's regret about if not 'confession' of the incident on the beach. During this confession Trilishiya, the young woman whom the reader encounters, is not the same young woman whom s/he has already encountered at the hotel through Bandara's mother's verdict about the incident. Rather she, again, becomes a helpless girl (*asarana kella*) who is not even in a position to decide where to go (or not to go) in front of her male counterpart. This doing of Trilishiya's identity as an *asarana kella* (helpless girl) in fact erases and negates her identity as a *noasandala kella* (immoral girl) which the same text has already portrayed. Therefore once again we are reminded that this same signifier does not denote the same meaning(s) as it (dis)appears or is uttered in different con-texts. So the signifier *kella* is not meaningful in and of itself. Rather it is – and its (connotative) meanings are – relational (Jenkins 2000); must await being said or written in order to become what it is (Derrida 1978: 11). So Trilishiya's identity, which the reader confronts, always (dis)appears as a double-bind; that is, it, at the same time, (dis)appears as both possible and impossible (to undo), both respectable and pejorative, both innocent and immoral (Derrida 1988b).

This aporia of (doing) the identity, however, neither means undoing the identity is impossible nor implies that the *lamai* identity – its deferred derogated presence in the industry, which remains suppressed in official-written texts of (doing) HRM – has already 'evaporated'. So it does not imply that resistance to this doing is not present. Rather this undoing and resistance is always there. Nevertheless it is not easy and undemanding to identify, nor explicit, as we shall see in the next section.

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Mother, child and lamai

We are at Trilishiya's tailoring shop. Along with a few female sewing machine operators Trilishiya is also sewing. Trilishiya's domestic helper, Amara, is carrying her son – a child who is about three years old. Trilishiya's ex-manager enters the tailoring shop. She begins the encounter while she is cooing over the child.

> **Ex-manager:** Now, [he is] *loku lamayek* [a big child]. Anyhow, a brain of a real businessman. Shortly, [he will] set up a factory that will have power over this entire village. You must try to be like your father. Okay?
>
> **Trilishiya:** [Angrily and loudly] Amara what are you doing here. Go and feed *lamayawa* [the child].
>
> **Ex-manager:** How is the business, Trilishiya?
>
> **Trilishiya:** I am just doing it!
>
> **Ex-manager:** If you did the job only, you would never have been in this status [becoming the owner of the tailoring shop]. *Lamaya*, even a bank wouldn't give that much amount to *lamai* like you.
>
> **Trilishiya:** Hmm [she is avoiding a response].

Unlike in other encounters, Trilishiya, the young woman whom the reader encounters here, is substantially different. On the one hand, she is a mother and owner of a tailoring shop. On the other hand, she is noticeably not playing a passive role as she used to play, mainly in the factory milieu. So Trilishiya is arrogant and never utters 'Madam' to address her ex-manager. Instead the ex-manager uses her ex-subordinate's proper name, Trilishiya. However, as the text unfolds, the proper name – hence this 'recognition' of the irreducibility of (the existence of) the Other as *Other,* at least in this moment (Derrida 1997; Jones 2003) – is, violently, but subtly, substituted by the term *lamaya* and subsequently *lamai* when the ex-manager happens to comment about the banks' unwillingness to give a loan to Trilishiya.

This substitution and hence this (re)appearance of Trilishiya's collective identity as *lamai,* its deferred presence, is neither accidental nor innocent. On the contrary this utterance, particularly the phrase '*lamai* like you', emerges at the very moment the ex-manager recognizes her ex-shopfloor worker's arrogant behaviour. So this (re)appearance of the term/identity *lamai* is a violent but hidden means that suppresses Trilishiya's arrogant, active role and consequently tends to rupture and erase her mature, independent identity as a single mother and owner of a tailoring shop. On the other hand, this utterance if not doing the *lamai* identity of Trilishiya, I argue, creates an 'indissoluble' ethical paradox within which Trilishiya's son – the 'true child' who is looked after by a domestic helper – and Trilishiya, the mother of the 'true child' and the employer of the helper, simultaneously become *lamaya* – a 'little one'. So the text – its deep interior – reiterates the 'fake' nature of age and even of the changes in other demographic statuses as far as doing or narrating the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers in the con-text of Sri Lanka's apparel industry is concerned. The text in fact, although it marks Trilishiya's resistance and the possibility of her (potential) power, reminds Trilishiya (and indeed of the reader) of her collective identity – its deferred presence – which emerges like a 'curse' from which she can apparently never escape.

Beyond the exterior

Although *Grahanaya* is all about a tragic love story, the text, as it narrates Trilishiya's different calamities, tends to 'peel off' (the deceiving layers of) its own exterior and, consequently, unveils her very (non)existence in Sri Lanka's apparel industry as a *lamaya*/*lamai*. So it marks the double-bind nature of this collective identity, its becoming, which always remains unfinished, is always awaiting the next supplement. And thus it

marks Trilishiya's resistance to her very (non)existence in the industry as *lamai* and hence her (potential) 'power' to rupture it as well as her 'helplessness'. Thus like the identity itself doing the *lamai* identity, as this cinematic text tells us, is not simple and straightforward, nor solely the act of the actors in the apparel industry. Instead it is complex, recursive, reflexive, and constantly under construction (Ybema et al. 2009: 301).

Thus this becoming of Trilishiya's identity always tends to keep the reader, who faces the text/the identity, in a blur since the text ruptures what it has already synthesised, negates what it has already established, erases what it has already traced as the 'truth' of (doing) the *lamai* identity as it (re)narrates Trilishiya's calamities. Trilishiya's identity is indeed always subject to supplement by the tension not only between her gender and class/occupation but also between the (discursive formation of) ideal womanhood in Sri Lankan society and the everyday reality which she confronts, negotiates and (re)produces – her very (non)existence – in the industry as the signifier *lamaya*/*lamai* oscillates from one con-text to another. So it always brings back the interplay between her *ganu lamai* identity – along with other residual identities, such as *kello* (girls), *daruwo* (children, daughters or sons) etc. – and her class/occupation as a factory woman in the industry, which nonetheless remains suppressed in official-written texts of (doing) HRM.

This absent presence of (doing) the *lamai* identity is also illustrated in other cinematic texts, mostly in 'classical films' (e.g. *Purahanda Kaluwara* 1997; *Sulang Kirilli* 2002; *Boradiya Pokuna* 2004), which were woven and interwoven in the 1990s and later, the period in which the term/identity *lamai* began to fade away in official-written texts of (doing) HRM. These cinematic texts (re)narrate many 'unsaid' facets of the everyday life of these

workers, perhaps based on 'true' stories as in *Sulang Kirilli* (2002), for example, where an unmarried young factory woman in the industry who conceives a child becomes the victim of many socio-organizational forces, processes and prejudices.

Sulang Kirilli (The Wind Bird)

As the English summary of the back cover of the DVD of *Sulang Kirilli* embodies, this cinematic text goes something like this:

> Rathie [Rathnawali]: a young village girl working in a garment factory in the city [the Katunayake FTZ], falls in love with a soldier. One fine day Rathie realizes she has conceived with a child. But when she comes to know her lover is a married man she becomes a victim of a social catastrophe, in a country where the civil society decries ILLEGITIMATES and the criminal law prohibits ABORTION. (Original emphasis)

The female shopfloor worker, Rathie, whom the reader encounters in this cinematic text, is the younger child of a family in a remote village. But the text does not portray either the background of her family or her family members. Its narrative structure emerges somewhat radically, without a linear and continuous flow, including many flashbacks as well as Rathie's dreams or imaginings. However, as the text narrates different calamities of Rathie's life, we come to know her father is a gentle man suffering from a prolonged illness, her mother is a tough woman in her fifties and her (unseen) elder brother is a small shop owner in the village who is going to get married. Also the text recounts to the reader that Rathie does not face the same economic hardship as the majority of shopfloor workers (Devanarayana 1997; de Silva 2002; Attanapola 2005), although she comes to work in the zone.

Rathie's lover, Shantha, is a soldier who serves in the Northern part of Sri Lanka – where the separatist war of the Tamil Tigers took place. He is married with children and comes from a poor family background in another remote village. As the text unfolds, the reader comes to realize that Rathie has started this affair without knowing that Shantha is married. However, Rathie cannot end the affair as she has conceived a child by Shantha. As a result Rathie, the female shopfloor worker in an apparel manufacturing company in the zone, becomes a victim of two antagonistic social stigmas – either rear an 'illegitimate' child degraded by civil society but according to her own wish or go for an illegal abortion as forced primarily by her married lover. In this context the film concludes with a truly horrifying scene in which Rathie delivers her child – her socio-biological 'burden' – secretly into the lavatory in her boarding house and flees the zone.

Despite this plot which seems to recount to the social tragedy of Rathie, the unmarried young woman who has conceived a child, *Sulang Kirilli*, as it unfolds, also (re)narrates Rathie's daily struggle with her own (pregnant) body with a view to existing in the *kalape* in particular and wider Sri Lankan society in general. This struggle which we confront from the very beginning of the text is, however, not about Rathie as a 'mere' (unmarried) *ganu lamaya* (young woman or girl) who has conceived a child but, more crucially, as a female shopfloor worker in the *kalape* where her collective identity as *lamaya*/*lamai* is done, narrated, restored and undone.

A gentle signifier or scattered identity

The film begins with a scene where Rathie is collecting the results of her pregnancy test from the counter of a private medical laboratory. Following this starting scene, we enter

Rathie's boarding house, a small wooden house. Rathie's friend, Vijitha, is talking with Rathie at the front door of the house. The scene is continuously interrupted by the loud sound of an unseen drunken man. He is insulting his wife, Violet, who works in a garment factory in the zone, by accusing her of an extra-marital affair.

> **(Unseen) Drunk:** I'll hack you.., *patta vesi* [dirty whore]. Hey, where is your hero? Ask him to come out. Hey, Violet, is that what you were doing all these days? By telling [me] that going to *garment* [factory] is this that you have done? You slept with him.., by cheating me....

As this interruption continues Vijitha leaves the scene. Rathie enters her boarding house. She is remembering an incident where she made love with Shantha.

> **Rathie:** Wait, will you?
> **Shantha:** Sh.., don't shout *lamayo*. Others in the next room hear.
> **Rathie:** That's why. Don't bother me.
> **Shantha:** Am I bother?
> **Rathie:** No, that's not what I meant.
> **Shantha:** Then?

As this scene narrates, at the very moment Rathie emerges in the text, the term *lamaya* appears to signify her presence. But it appears as a rather 'gentle' signifier that seems to indicate Rathie's identity as a (*ganu*) *lamaya* in wider Sri Lankan society as it is uttered by her lover during sex. The 'gentleness' of the term/the identity which the reader encounters has, however, already been interrupted by the (unseen) drunken man's verdict about the deeds of his wife, the 'dirty whore' in Sri Lanka's apparel industry, in the *vesa kalape* (the zone of whores) (Lynch 2002; 2007; Hewamanne 2003; 2008). So the text implies that Rathie as a *lamaya* is a member of the same group as Violet, the 'dirty whore'. Thus the 'gentleness' which the term/the identity embodies is not gentleness as such, but its

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impossibility in the con-text of Sri Lanka's apparel industry where adult, able factory women, as we have already seen, become *lamai* and *Juki lamai* if not *keli* (pieces). So the signifier *lamai*, I argue, is not merely about Rathie's gender identity in wider Sri Lankan society as *ganu lamai* but it goes with and is embedded in her role as a factory woman in the industry, even though these roles/identities are not entirely separable from one other. This indissoluble intermingling between gender and class, which we have already identified elsewhere, emerges vividly when Rathie's (unseen) factory floor appears.

It is dawn. We are at Rathie's boarding house. She is lying in bed. The reader can hear an (unseen) encounter between Rathie's friend, Vijitha, and one of her female managers, probably the operations/floor manager of the factory. The scene notifies the reader that Rathie has not reported to work today.

> **Manager:** Where's Rathnawali [Rathie] today? Hasn't she come to work?
> **Vijitha:** Yes *Madam*, she hasn't come to work.
> **Manager**: She hasn't informed us that she would not come today. Went half-day yesterday also [to collect the pregnancy test results]. Vijitha, do you know anything about why has she not come today?
> **Vijitha:** No *Madam*. Even last evening I spoke with her but.
> **Manager**: I don't know why these *lamai* don't come to work even during the *probation period*.

This encounter appears to involve the manager's routine query about her absent subordinate – Rathie, the probationary worker. But, as the encounter unfolds, the worker's proper name, Rathnawali, is substituted by the term/the identity *lamai* when the manager says 'I don't know why these *lamai* don't come to work…'. Thus the encounter reaffirms what we have already confronted on Trilishiya's factory floor – gender is not the sole 'element' of Rathie

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and her colleagues' identity as *lamai* in the industry because female shopfloor workers become *lamai* whereas the manager, the middle-class woman, remains as 'Madam'. On the other hand, it further ruptures the 'genteelness' of *lamaya/lamai,* as uttered by Rathie's lover, and reminds us that this same signifier is not as innocent as when it (dis)appears in the con-text of Sri Lanka's apparel industry, although it remains suppressed in its official-written texts of (doing) HRM. However, this 'truth' of Rathie's identity as *lamaya*/*lamai*, as the text narrates the different calamities of her life, becomes more and more blurred.

Now we are at a private medical centre. Rathie is lying on a bed. A middle-aged male doctor is diagnosing Rathie (her pregnant body). A young female nurse is standing beside the doctor.

> **Doctor:** *Lamaya*, when was your last period?
> **Rathie:** About three months ago.
> **Doctor:** Be precise: tell [me] the exact date. I need to know the month of the last period.
> **Rathie:** Last April.
> **Doctor:** Hmm, four months. Did you meet a doctor before?
> **Rathie:** No.
> **Doctor:** Then how did you get the urine report [pregnancy test]?
> **Rathie:** From Colombo.
> **Doctor:** I mean, was it on medical advice? I need to know month of the last period.
> **Rathie:** No, before this, *lamayek* [a girl] in my boarding place had done urine test from that place.
> **Doctor:** Hmm, already too late….

In this encounter between a doctor and his patient, disregarding its 'professional' character and Rathie's biological status as a pregnant woman, Rathie emerges as *lamaya*. Referring to or if not doing Rathie's identity as *lamaya/lamai* in this con-text, however, appears as a

rather accepted, generalised and 'innocent' practice because we know that Rathie is a *ganu lamaya* (young woman or girl) in wider Sri Lankan society. Despite this (apparent) innocence, the text portrays her 'ignorance' and 'inability' to govern or take decisions about her own (pregnant) body, as she is a 'little one' (*lamaya*) who should be directed what to do (and not to do). Indeed she is, as Walkerdine (1989) tells us, *not* a 'thinking' subject. This doing of Rathie's identity thus marks her very (non)existence in a patriarchal society which tends to subjugate the possibility of her power as a proletarian woman in the industry. Nevertheless the text does not suggest that there is a pre-eminent 'doer' behind this doing. Rather it is what Rathie herself is also keen to do and restore. Indeed when she utters '…*lamayek* [a girl] in my boarding place…' she not only restores her own identity as *lamai* but also claims her collective lineage in Sri Lanka's apparel industry as 'the *lamai*' which echoes Georges Bataille's utterance: " I am myself the 'little one,' I have only a hidden place" (cited in Derrida 1997: 339).

Multiple voices, multiple girls

This doing of the *lamai* identity, as the reader has already seen in *Grahanaya*, is in process in this cinematic text as well. It is indeed always supplemented by other relational/residual terms/identities such as *kella* (girl) and vice versa. But the supplement itself is in a position to be supplemented. It "…will always be the moving tongue or acting through the hands of others" (Derrida 1997: 147). So the (meaning of) *kella* likewise is multiple, fragmented and is in the process of supplementation.

We are now at a pawnbroker. Rathie is pawning her gold necklace to borrow some money. She is remembering (or possibly imagining) the day that her lover wore her necklace.

> **Shantha:** This is the first time I am going to put a gold necklace on *kellekta* [a girl].
>
> **Rathie:** Don't. Wait till you put a gold necklace [on me] at the *poruva* ceremony[77] in our wedding.
>
> **Shantha:** *Pissu kella* [silly girl]! That's all nonsense in your head….

In this encounter Rathie's identity emerges as *kella* – a colloquialism which also signifies her identity as a young woman – which is subsequently substituted by *pissu kella* (silly girl). These terms as uttered by Rathie's lover and hence this doing of her identity as *kella* appears as a rather gentle and 'innocent' signifier of Rathie as a young woman. This apparently gentle and innocent signification is, however, once again ephemeral. It is indeed the 'deferred presence' (Derrida 1982) of its tainted meaning(s) in Sri Lanka's apparel industry (see Lynch 2002; 2007; Hewamanne 2003; 2008). So, as the text unfolds, we see that this absence of tainted meaning is just a spatiotemporal delay.

Now we see Rathie and her lover are travelling in a trishaw. They are in its back seat. Shantha is encouraging Rathie to have an abortion. But she remains silent.

> **Shantha:** Rathie, do what I told you. There is no reason to be afraid. You said *kellek* [a girl] that is with you all did it [had an abortion] once. Don't tell this to anyone else….

Unlike other encounters, here Shantha utters Rathie's proper name and hence recognizes (the irreducibility) of her presence, even though he dominates the encounter while Rathie remains silent. Shantha's recognition of Rathie as an irreducible, unique subject is,

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[77] The *poruva* is a decorated wooden platform on to which the couple will step at an auspicious time during their wedding day. It symbolises the place on which the transition from singlehood to marriage takes place. So the *poruva* ceremony is regarded as the most important event in the wedding (Disanayaka 1998). As part of the rituals associated with the ceremony, in most cases, the bridegroom puts a gold necklace on the bride.

however, once more ephemeral. As the encounter unfolds, it is ruptured and suppressed, violently but subtly, when Shantha says '…*kellek* [a girl] that is with you all…' The *kella* (girl) whom we encounter here is neither the girl in Rathie's recollection nor a girl in wider Sri Lankan society as such. On the contrary, I argue that *kellek* here implies its deferred (derogated) presence – *garment* or *Juki kella* (*Juki* girl) in Sri Lanka's apparel industry, particularly in the 'notorious' Katunayake FTZ (Devanarayana 1997; Lynch 2002; 2007; Hewamanne 2003; 2008; Attanapola 2005). On the other hand, it restores Rathie's membership of this collective identity which she herself has already affirmed at the medical clinic. Therefore the text reminds us that Rathie's lover's 'right' to control her body – by forcing her to have an abortion – is not merely due to his 'right' as a man in this patriarchal society. It is primarily due to Rathie's 'worthless' body if not being as a female shopfloor worker, what Pullen and Knights (2007: 508) might call life not worth living, and indeed as a garment or *Juki kella* (*Juki* girls) if not *Juki keli* (*Juki* pieces) (Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; Hewamanne 2003; 2008) – the objectified subject (Spivak 1988b) – in Sri Lanka's apparel industry.

But the colloquialism *kella* (girl), as we have already seen in *Grahanaya*, does not always denote the derogated identity of female shopfloor workers in the apparel industry. It is indeed not a 'poison' as such. Rather it also tends to signify affection and love and is thus also a remedy (Derrida 1981). Now it is twilight at Rathie's boarding house. Rathie and her friend Vijitha are discussing her abortion.

> **Vijitha:** Okay, *kelle* [girl]. Tomorrow, everything will be all right, after you release from this burden [after the abortion]. Then [we] will try to find a job somewhere else in the zone….

In this encounter Rathie's common identity as a young woman or girl is done and restored again when Vijitha utters the term *kella* to address her friend. However, it neither signifies Rathie's common identity as a mere *ganu lamaya* in wider Sri Lankan society nor narrates her degraded identity as *Juki* or garment *kella* in the apparel industry. Rather it tends to signify affection and nurturing and hence appears as a means that brings a cure. So it appears as a poison in one con-text and a remedy in another, the Platonian *Pharmakon* (Derrida 1981). Thus its impossibility – affection, nurture etc. – is also its possibility as the signifier oscillates from one con-text to another. Therefore the text reminds us that like Trilishiya's identity what the reader encounters as Rathie's identity – indeed female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* – is a double-bind (Derrida 1988b). It is always in process, always remains unfinished, awaiting the next supplement. Its gentle as well as (deferred) tainted temperament(s)/meaning(s) are a matter of the context in which the identity (dis)appears, is done, narrated, restored and undone.

The end as the beginning

But this becoming of Rathie's collective identity as *lamai* never leads to its total effacement even when Rathie struggles to escape from it by fleeing the zone after delivering her child into the lavatory in her boarding place, as narrated in the last scenes of the film.

We are on a busy road near the zone. Rathie has a car accident while she is crossing.

> **Male bystander:** Quick, carry her to the pavement**.**
> **Female bystander:** Are you hurt?
> **Driver:** *Lamaya*, you crossed the road by dreaming. I managed to stop the vehicle with
> the greatest difficulty.

Male bystander: Sir, no need to talk about what has happened. Just take this *lamayawa* [girl] to a hospital.

Driver: Yes, [but] no injuries I suppose.

Male bystander: But who knows where there are internal injuries, as the manner [in which] this *lamaya* has fallen down [onto the road].

Another male bystander: Don't let him [the driver] go off.

Despite her revolt against her socio-biological burden and indeed her very (non)existence in the industry as a pregnant woman and female shopfloor worker, even in this (unforeseen) social encounter Rathie becomes if not remains as a *lamaya.* However, here (doing) her identity emerges as her *ganu lamai* identity in wider Sri Lankan society. But the text, as it unfolds, reminds us that this (dis)appearance of Rathie's collective identity in this con-text is not merely due to her young appearance – i.e., her age. Rather, as I argue, it is also due to the place where the accident happened and hence due to her (alleged) occupational identity.

As the final scene of the film narrates we are now inside the car which knocked Rathie down. Rathie is in the back seat. In the front seat the driver's wife and his little daughter sit. The driver, his wife and his daughter's appearance embody that they are middle class.

Wife: *Lamaya*, where are you from?

Rathie: Biyagama [a village in Sri Lanka].

Driver: Are you doing a job here [in the zone]?

Rathie: No.

As this encounter narrates this middle class couple wants to know who this strange young woman travelling with them is. Nevertheless the (apparently) random seating arrangement[78] reminds us how the couple create a spatial gap between themselves and this strange (working-class) woman. So when the driver's wife uses the term *lamaya* to address Rathie, it portrays, more or less, her *ganu lamai* (young women's) identity in wider Sri Lankan society. However, this rather 'innocent' signifier and hence relatively honoured identity is suddenly suppressed when the driver, the middle-class gentleman, wants to know whether Rathie is doing a job in the zone. So, despite its exterior, the interior of the text insists that this 'innocent' term when it appears or is uttered in the con-text of Sri Lanka's apparel industry is always in a position to suppress and surpass not only its denotative meaning but also what it connotes in wider Sri Lankan society (see *Gunasena Great Sinhala Dictionary* 2005). Indeed it appears, disappears and reappears as the signifier par excellence that tends to do and portray the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers in Sri Lanka's apparel industry by bracketing other residual/relational identities, although it is not fixed, nor singular.

Beyond the social tragedy

Thus, like Trilishiya in *Grahanaya* Rathie, the proletarian young woman whom this cinematic text portrays, not only 'negotiates' with but also more importantly rebels against her own (non)existence in the industry, even though the text – its plot – is chiefly about the social tragedy of an unmarried young woman who has conceived a child. As the text

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[78] In Sri Lanka when working class people, primarily female domestic helpers, are travelling with their employers the helper is customarily supposed to be seated in the back seat while the employers are in the front seat (or vice versa).

unfolds, it tends to rupture its own plot and (re)narrates the everyday reality of female shopfloor workers in the industry where their collective identity as *lamai* (dis)appears, is uttered, done, narrated and undone. So, as the text (re)narrates, the social calamities of Rathie it also, in a Foucauldian sense, tends to realize and renarrate her very (non)existence as a factory worker or woman in the *kalape* which the text has not (originally) intended to recount (Foucault 1972; Hook 2001).

This shifting and fragmented nature of the term/identity *lamaya/lamai* and more importantly how different social actors, particularly in the *kalape*, gather together and intermingle to do, narrate, restore and even undone the identity are also noticeable in what film critics in Sri Lanka are eager to categorise as 'middle path films' like *Kinihiriya Mal* (2000). These sit in between 'classic' and 'popular' films.

Kinihiriya Mal (Fireflies)

This melodramatic film is also about the tragedy of a female shopfloor worker, named Sanduni, in the Katunayake FTZ. Sanduni is the eldest daughter of poor family in a remote village. She lives in a boarding house in the zone. One day, when Sanduni, who is inexperienced, is alone she is charmed by an apparently affluent woman, Princy, who lives in a large mansion near the boarding house. Princy is a pimp or broker who supplies women to massage clinics.[79] So she traps Sanduni and later introduces her to a male pimp called Gadda. Subsequently Gadda rapes Sanduni when she is drunk.[80] Having no choice

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[79] In Sri Lanka, most of the places which are known as 'massage clinics' are virtually brothels.
[80] Alcohol consumption by women in Sri Lanka is rare, although some women, primarily in cities and plantation estates, may consume liquor.

Sanduni then becomes a masseuse in the clinic. As a masseuse she is able to earn more money by seducing the customers due to her attractiveness and skills in the job. However, one day, a businessman from Sanduni's village, who is also an occasional customer of the massage clinic, notices her there. He discloses Sanduni's secret and the reason for her family's new prosperity to the villagers. As a result the villagers attack Sanduni's family as she has brought embarrassment to them. During this Sanduni's father is injured and dies on the spot. Her brother later commits suicide due to his family's shame. Shocked by these catastrophes Sanduni gives up her masseuse job and returns to her boarding house to find a new job in the zone.

In the meantime she has fallen in love with the son of one of her customers, who is a wealthy businessman. As the businessman is totally against this 'true love affair' the film ends with a scene which narrates Sanduni's tragic death on her birthday. She is pushed off the balcony of a shopping mall by Gadda under the instructions of the businessman while her lover – the son of the businessman – has gone to buy a birthday gift to surprise her.

Despite this (melodramatic) plot where moral virtues of 'innocent' young women from villages are profoundly compromised when they come to the 'notorious' Katunayake FTZ, *Kinihiriya Mal* narrates Sanduni's very (non)existence, her and her colleagues' daily struggles to survive in the *kalape*, the ways in which they negotiate, do and undo their 'collective selves' (Kondo 1990a; 1990b) as proletarian women in the industry. Nevertheless the film as a whole tends to stereotype the struggle and indeed their identity in wider Sri Lankan society. However, unlike *Grahanaya* and *Sulang Kirilli,* it tells us more about other social actors' role(s) – the owners of boarding houses, their neighbours etc.

(with whom I (dis)engage with in chapter 6) – in the industry vis-à-vis doing, narrating and undoing the workers' collective identity as *lamai*. Thus, even at the very beginning of this cinematic text, we hear their voices and see their doing of the *lamai*.

Neighbours, co-workers and lamai

We are in a two storey mansion situated near Sanduni's boarding house. A middle-aged woman, Princy, is talking with her mother, an older woman. Their outfits, appearance and accent manifest that they are affluent women.

> **Mother:** Matilda [the owner of Sanduni's boarding house] is shouting by throwing out that *kella* [girl - Sanduni] even today.[81]
>
> **Daughter:** Yes it is.. a pity!
>
> **Mother:** Because of this *Free Trade Zone*, we can't live in this area. *Game gode kello* [rural rustic girls] have come and lodged everywhere. No [more] any freedom [for us]. These *lamai* should be at least provided boarding facility.
>
> **Daughter:** If that happens, Mum, how do people in this area earn some money? All the houses in the area have converted to boarding places like rooster houses! They are earning money somehow by caging in all the *kello* [girls] like hens. Top business!

The female shopfloor workers if not *lamai* whom we confront here are not those whom we have already confronted in official-written texts of the industry, nor exactly those whom we have met in *Grahanaya* and *Kinihiriya Mal*. On the contrary they are 'rural rustic girls' (*game gode kello*) who spoil 'the area' by lodging everywhere. The adjective/signifier 'rural' (*game*) here surpasses its denotative meaning – girls from villages – and, consequently, by entwining with the term 'rustic' (*gode*) signifies immaturity and

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[81] This reminds the reader about the argument took place between Sanduni and her boarding owner – Matilda – regarding monthly boarding fee, because Sanduni was unable to pay it promptly.

inexperience and indeed the 'vulgar' nature of 'these girls' – their pejorative identity, particularly in the *kalape* (see Hewamanne 2003; 2008; Attanapola 2005).

As the text unfolds, this colloquialism – *game gode kello* – is negated as it is substituted by the relatively honoured term *lamai*. This substitution and hence the negation of the 'vulgar' nature/ identity of rural girls is, however, similarly ephemeral. As such, as the text unfolds, when the affluent woman says '…'by caging' in all the *kello* (girls) like hens', the supplement itself is supplemented and hence the negation is negated (Derrida 1997). So this cinematic text, at its very beginning, reminds us that this (apparently) honoured signifier and indeed identity – *lamai* – is neither fixed nor free from its pejorative meaning(s). Rather it is the deferred (derogated) presence of the identity of garment or *Juki lamai/kello* in the industry (Devanarayana; 1997; Silva 1997; Lynch 2002; 2007; Hewamanne 2003; 2008). But more such substitutions and so interpretations are to come as those who take 'refuge' in the *kalape* speak out. Indeed, by suppressing its derogatory meanings and hence upsetting the reader's realization of this 'truth' of the *lamai* identity, this same term/signifier *lamaya/lamai*, as the reader has already experienced in *Grahanaya* and *Sulang Kirilli,* emerges here too as a 'gentle' and 'innocent' one as it oscillates from one context to another.

Now we are at Sanduni's boarding place, a small wooden house. A young woman is lying in a bed, suffering from a fever. Sanduni and her colleague, Renuka, are preparing their dinner.

    Renuka: Why didn't you pay the last month's boarding fee?

Sanduni: I paid an advance payment for the jewellery shop for that gold necklace in this month. There was nothing left!

Renuka: Why [does] *lamayo* you buy a necklace right now? You have a lot of things to do.

Sanduni: The necklace is not for me.

Renuka: For whom?

Sanduni: For younger sister. I couldn't give [her] anything the day she became *loku lamayek*[82] [a big girl]. I have an obligation, because now I am doing a job.

In this encounter Sanduni's colleague, Renuka, also utters the term *lamaya* to address Sanduni. However, here it appears again as a rather 'innocent' and 'gentle' term/signifier that portrays Sanduni's *ganu lamaya/lamai* identity in wider Sri Lankan society. But this doesn't mean that its possibility of signifying her collective identity as *lamai* – the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers – in the industry is totally aborted. Rather this 'gentle' appearance is the very condition (of the possibility) of its (deferred) presence – female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* – as we can see in the following scene.

Now Princy (the affluent middle-aged woman whom the reader met in the first scene) is travelling in a taxi. Suddenly she notices Sanduni who is on her way to her boarding house after work. Princy invites Sanduni to get into the taxi.

Princy: Sh, come in *lamayo*. I'll drop you, come in [Sanduni gets into the taxi]. Why are you alone? Where is your friend [Renuka]?

Sanduni: She is going home today. So she left [the factory] earlier.

Princy: So you are alone today!

Sanduni: Not alone, *thawa lamayek* [another girl] is there [in the boarding house].

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[82] In Sri Lanka, particularly in rural villages, a girl's first menstrual period is celebrated according to an auspicious time decided by an astrologer based on her horoscope. The day of the first period is known as the day that she becomes *loku lamayek* (a big girl). This puberty custom is, however, dying away even in village life.

In this encounter Princy, the affluent woman, utters the term *lamaya* to invite Sanduni to get into the taxi. In this particular context, the term appears once more as an 'innocent' signifier that refers to young women (*ganu lamai*) in general, because the reader is aware that Sanduni (her identity) is a *ganu lamaya* in wider Sri Lankan society. However, this (dis)appearance and hence this 'absent presence' of her *lamai* identity in the industry is also its deferred presence (Derrida 1982). It is indeed what Sanduni, the female shopfloor worker herself, is eager to expose and do when she says that '… *thawa lamayek* (another girl) is there'. This signifier/adjective '*thawa*' (another), I argue, implies that Sanduni's colleague (and so Sanduni herself) is a tiny member of the 'universe of *lamai*' in the 'notorious' Katunayake FTZ, because the reader knows that those who live in this boarding house are women factory workers in the zone. Therefore the text insists to the reader that the signification of (the identity of) *ganu lamaya/lamai* alone (through the signifier *lamaya/lamai*) vis-à-vis portraying female shopfloor workers (their collective identity) in the con-text of Sri Lanka's apparel industry is the impossibility of its possibility. Thus I argue that when the signifier *lamai* (dis)appears or is uttered – by Princy, the affluent woman, here for example – in the con-text of Sri Lanka's apparel industry it marks the deferred presence of the workers' collective identity in the industry as *lamai*, but not (*ganu*) *lamai per se*.

Good girls, naughty girls and others

However, this collective identity, as we have already seen it, is heterogeneous, fragmented, and even contradictory. It intersects and intermingles not only with young women's gender identity – *ganu lamai* – in wider Sri Lankan society but also with many other discursively articulated identities as the term/identity *lamai* oscillates from one con-text to another.

Now we see Renuka and Matilda going to find out what has happened to Sanduni (because she has been kidnapped by Gadda). They meet a man known as Mr. Shockman in front of his small wooden house near Sanduni's boarding house. Mr. Shockman is well aware of the environs of the *kalape* and its happenings.

> **Mr. Shockman:** Matilda, there is no point to talk about that *lamaya* [Sanduni]. These people catch *lassana ganu lamai* [beautiful girls] like catching fish. I last saw that *lamaya* riding on a [motor]bike with Gadda. One person is that Princy in the two storey house… Another one is that Gadda. His job is that putting *ganu lamai* [girls] in trouble [rape/sexual assault] and then introducing them to the massage clinics.
>
> **Renuka:** I can't understand anything of this. Mr. Shockman, what is this trouble that Sanduni is caught up in?
>
> **Matilda:** Renuka, I have told you that Sanduni is not *lamayek* [a girl] like you. I knew one day she would put herself in trouble.
>
> **Renuka:** Are you mad, Matilda *akka* [elder sister]? Sanduni is not that type of *naraka lamayek* [a bad girl]! I'll find out what has happened. She must be in some sort of trouble.
>
> **Mr. Shockman:** What does *kello* [girls] coming from villages know about what is happening here? Matilda, you should tell them who Princy and the others are.

In this encounter we see the ways in which the proper names of this missing female shopfloor worker, Sanduni, and her colleague, Renuka, and so their identity as *lamaya*/*lamai* and *kella* (girl) substitute for each other. In this process of supplementation – which appears as a rather ordinary occurrence in the *kalape* – the text distinguishes 'urban girls' from 'rural girls', 'good girls' from 'naughty girls' and so on. So the text not only reiterates the heterogeneous and shifting nature of (doing) the *lamai* identity. It also, more importantly, embodies how these identities emerge or are formed as the result of or as the

Other in a binary language pair. This pair privileges one over the other by creating a preeminent centre which is always the former and not the latter (Derrida 1981; 1997; Spivak 1988b; 2001) where this second term of the pair is considered the negative, corrupt, undesirable version of the first (Johnson 1981: viii). So other than *lassan ganu lamai* (beautiful girls), the (identity of) *lamai* that goes with (the identity of) female shopfloor workers here is, vulgar and rustic (*game* or *gode lamai* - village or rustic girls) and more crucially naughty or corrupted (*naraka lamai* - naughty girls). This supplement and hence this doing is thus more violent than its (dis)appearance in the text. So when it categorises Sanduni and her colleague – Renuka – as *and* not as 'that type of *lamayek* (a girl)', it effectively means not (the identity of) *lamaya per se*, but that of 'prostitute'. This dangerous supplement is not a surprise in the context of the Katunayake FTZ as it is known as 'the zone of easy going women' and indeed as '*vesa kalape*' – the zone of whores (Fernando 2001; Lynch 2002; 2007; Hewamanne 2003; 2008).

However, this centre of the text – good/urban girls within which the workers' identity as *lamai* becomes the periphery, *gode/naraka* (rustic/naughty) *lamai* – we know, is not a holy place which is fixed and timeless. Rather it is a fragile and ruined sphere in which, as Derrida (1978: 280) tells us, an infinite number of sign-substitutions come to play. So it is always in a position to be ruptured and substituted. In fact Renuka – her identity – emerges not as 'that type of *lamayek*' whereas Sanduni becomes as 'that type of *lamayek*' (a prostitute), despite their common membership in the universe of *lamai* in the *kalape*. So the text reiterates that the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers, as we have already seen, is not fixed or even fixable. It is subject to change and to 'evaporation'. This evaporation, as we have already seen in *Grahanaya*, is in this cinematic text also not due to mere

changes in the workers' age or of other demographic statuses. Rather it occurs only if they radically detach from their class/occupation (identity) as female shopfloor workers in the industry.

Being and not being lamai

At this point we are in Sanduni's village. A group of villagers are coming to collect donations for a ceremony at the village temple. They are visiting Renuka's house. Renuka's father welcomes them. As the scene narrates, they know each other very well.

> **Villager 1:** Renuka *duwa* [daughter], we heard you have come. That's why we came. [Three villagers are sitting in chairs in the living room. Renuka and her mother are joining the encounter].
>
> **Renuka:** *Mama* [uncle], is the work at the temple going ahead?
>
> **Villager 1:** A lot of work is completed now. Even the chief monk wanted to come here. But he is going here and there for this work. Aha, the chief monk is hoping to have the ceremony next month.
>
> **Villager 2:** We visited Sanduni *nonalage* [Madam's] home on our way. That *nona* [Madam] has not come home for a long time. Her mother promised to donate Rs. 3000[83] [for the ceremony]. Hmm.
>
> **Renuka:** It is difficult for me to donate that much money *mame* [uncle]. I will give Rs. 250. If I can, I'll try to ask for some money from the factory *lamai* and give [it].
>
> **Villager 1:** That's okay! Engaging meritorious acts the way you can.
>
> **Villager 2:** Isn't Sanduni *nona* [Madam] working at the same place as you *lamaya* now?
>
> **Renuka:** No.

This encounter appears as a mere discussion among villagers who know each other. So they utter terms such as *duwa* (daughter), *mama* (uncle) etc. to address one another. However, as

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[83] This amount is equal to £15, roughly, according to the exchange rate at the time of writing. But it is a considerable amount of money in Sri Lanka.

the text unfolds, Sanduni's identity emerges as *nona* (Madam) while Renuka, the female shopfloor worker – although she is a graduate – remains as *lamaya/lamai*. This sudden change in or shift of Sanduni's identity from *lamaya* to *nona* (madam) in the village context is not accidental. Nor is it merely due to her recent wealth following her taking the job as a masseuse. Rather, as the text notifies, it is chiefly due to a change in her occupation, because the villagers know that Sanduni is no longer a factory worker in the apparel industry, even though they are unaware of her new occupation.

Thus when a villager asks 'Isn't Sanduni *nona* (Madam) working at the same place as you *lamaya* now?' it portrays not Renuka (her identity), the *ganu lamaya* (young woman or girl), but Renuka, the female shopfloor worker, a fact which Renuka herself has already (re)affirmed when she says 'I'll try to ask for some money from the factory *lamai*'. Indeed the text reminds the reader that Renuka, the shopfloor female worker, is required to carry this collective identity, its socio-organizational burden, as we have also seen in *Grahanaya* and *Sulang Kirilli,* unless she radically detaches from or changes her occupation – its identity as *lamai* in the con-text of Sri Lanka's apparel industry.

Beyond the melodrama

Kinihiriya Mal as established evolves as a melodramatic film. Also its plot as a whole is not about female shopfloor workers in the apparel industry in the zone. Nevertheless the film, as we have seen, (re)narrates some scenes which portray the everyday life and struggles of female shopfloor workers in the zone. Thus these scenes in particular and the film in general create a textual space or textscape (Keenoy and Oswick 2003) for the reader who faces the text to reproduce these workers' very (non)existence in the industry, particularly

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in the *kalape*, as *lamai*. And so it recounts to us how different actors in the *kalape* gather together and intermingle to do, narrate and to restore the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers in the industry. Thus the text, as it unfolds, exceeds its plot and 'peels off' its own exterior. And so it tells us how the *lamai* identity emerges in the industry, particularly in the *kalape,* as a heterogeneous, fragmented socio-linguistic construct which is always awaiting the next supplement. So this same signifier/identity tends to signify and portray 'good' girls as well as 'naughty' girls, feeble as well as able and so on as it oscillates from one con-text to another. This aporia of the *lamai* identity, the text does not suggest, makes undoing and renarrating the identity impossible. But nor does it suggest any means to *un*do the identity.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I synthesize a genealogical note of the formation and construction of female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* since young women workers' arrival in the industry. Therefore I dissect and problematize (doing) the *lamai* identity as portrayed in a variety of different 'written' texts that are woven and interwoven by many different social actors in the industry, particularly in the wider Sri Lankan society. So, in this chapter, I dissect how these actors gather together and intermingle to do, narrate and restore the workers' collective identity as *lamai* in different phases of the industry, in its 'effective history', as Foucault (1998b) tells us. However, in this 'genealogical note' I do not attempt to derive or trace a straight line of the formation of the *lamai* identity since these young women's arrival in the industry in its nascent liberalized context in the late 1970s. Rather my attempt is to examine and problematize the (apparent) evaporation of early temperaments of the *lamai* identity, for example '*Juki lamai'* in the 1980s, and the

emergence of rather 'ethical-formal' new identities, mainly in official-*written* texts of (doing) HRM in the industry. During this I show the (deferred) presence of the signifier/identity *lamai,* mainly in 'local texts' (of undoing HRM), despite its 'absence' and 'evaporation' in official-written texts of (doing) HRM in the industry. And so I mark the heterogeneous, fragmented nature of the *lamai* identity – its becoming – and show its double-blind nature as the term/identity *lamai* oscillates from one con-text to another.

In this context I argue that the aporetic nature of the *lamai* identity creates an 'indissoluble' ethical paradox within which adult, able women factory workers become *lamai* and, consequently, objects or othered Other – *Juki kello* (*Juki* girls) if not *keli* (pieces) – in Sri Lanka's apparel industry unless they radically change or depart from their very (non)existence in the industry as *lamai*. However, this aporia of (doing) the *lamai* identity, as we have already seen, do not make undoing and renarrating of the identity impossible. Rather it always makes undoing possible, although it does not tend to a total effacement of the *lamai* identity. Thus the absent presence of the term/identity *lamai* in official-*written* texts of (doing) HRM in the industry, I argue, is just a spatiotemporal delay – its deferred presence. This encourages us to examine what (un)doing HRM and so textual HRM and local texts 'really' do for (doing) the *lamai* identity in the work milieu, in the process of managing (female shopfloor) labour in the industry. Thus with this observation we continue our *re*narrating journey of (doing) the *lamai* identity in two apparel manufacturing companies – ChillCo and HotCo – in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

(Re)Narrating *Lamai*:
A tale(s) of two 'cities'

Introduction

This is a tale(s) of two 'cities'. One is a small, 'calm' rural Sri Lankan village. The other is the 'hot', 'notorious' Katunayake FTZ. This tale is about 'stories' narrated at two apparel manufacturing companies, ChillCo and HotCo, in these two locations. It is about my engagement and disengagement; my pleasure and anger; my solidarity with and resistance to ChillCo and HotCo, their policies, processes, procedures, (managerial) apparatuses and above all their people or actors.

Thus this chapter articulates my *re*narration endeavour of (un)doing *lamai* (identity) at ChillCo and HotCo, the main research sites of my fieldwork. So it is, on the one hand, an extension of my reading of (un)doing the (*Juki*) *lamai* identity by the multiple story tellers in the industry and wider Sri Lankan society with whom we have (dis)engaged in the previous chapter, 'A genealogical note'. It is, on the other hand, a means of exploring and dissecting what role (un)doing HRM and so textual HRM and local texts play vis-à-vis (un)doing the *lamai* identity in these work milieus in particular and in wider apparel industry in general.

Thus this chapter goes like this. First it illustrates the nature, background and historical evolution of ChillCo with a view to drawing a picture of the work context within which the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers is done, narrated, restored and undone by

different actors there. Then it elaborates my renarration effort of (doing) the *lamai* identity as it (dis)appears in a variety of different texts – oral, written, official and unofficial or local – as woven and interwoven by the multiple actors of ChillCo (*viz.* the General Manager, Human Resource Manager, Operations Manager, Counsellor, a Production Assistant, supervisors and shopfloor workers). The chapter indeed recounts the ways in which the identity is done, narrated, restored and undone in different socio-spatial spheres or arrangements at ChillCo – as part and parcel of managing (female shopfloor) labour and so of (un)doing HRM – and its shifting and fragmented nature as it oscillates from one arrangement/con-text to another.

The chapter then moves to HotCo in the Katunayake FTZ. As for ChillCo, the chapter illustrates the nature, background and historical evolution of HotCo. Then it explores and renarrates (doing) the *lamai* identity – as part and parcel of managing (female shopfloor) labour and so of (un)doing HRM at HotCo – as it (dis)appears in the multiple texts in the company as woven and interwoven by different actors here (*viz.* the General Manager, Human Resource Manager, Factory Manager, Floor Manager, Assistant Human Resource Manager, shopfloor workers etc.). So the chapter, as a whole, marks and dissects not only the shifting nature of the identity itself but also, more importantly, its fragmented and heterogeneous nature as far as (un)doing this identity in HotCo and ChillCo, within the zone and outside of it, is concerned. So it dissects and explains what role doing and undoing HRM and so textual HRM and local texts plays in these work milieus. And, consequently, it problematizes the rhetoric–reality dualism of HRM along with the 'agenda of gender' of the phenomenon as far as (un)doing the *lamai* identity is concerned. Further it shows that the 'evaporation' of the *lamai* identity in official-written texts of (doing) HRM

in the industry, as we have seen in the previous chapter (4), is not a total effacement of the identity but its deferred presence. In its concluding remarks the chapter argues that (un)doing female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* in ChillCo and HotCo and indeed in the wider industry should be dissected, reread and renarrated within the discursive context within which it is done, narrated and restored – i.e., within and part and parcel of the nexus of the texts of Sri Lanka's apparel industry.

ChillCo

As discussed in the methodological chapter (2), as a result of the negotiations of my close friend, I gained access to ChillCo where I commenced my fieldwork at the end of April 2007. ChillCo is a large scale apparel manufacturing company located in a small village thirty kilometres from Colombo. It is the oldest member and the first apparel manufacturing company of a well established group of companies whose history dates back to the late nineteenth century. ChillCo was originally established in a suburban city near to Colombo by an entrepreneurial family in the mid 1950s. Since its establishment the company has been owned and managed by members of this (extended) family. Due to spatial constraints ChillCo moved to its present location in 2000.

ChillCo is a financially profitable company headed by a director appointed by the group. Day-to-day affairs of ChillCo are, however, carried out under the supervision of its General Manager (GM). Its customer portfolio consists of well known international buyers such as Asda, Levi's, Marks and Spencer, Tesco, Tommy Hilfiger and the like. ChillCo's managerial hierarchy and indeed line of functional authority and communication are clear and precise, even though they are quite complex. It has functional departments ranging

from merchandise and production through finance to human resources and so on, headed by what it calls 'senior' and 'junior' managers. Nevertheless my focus is primarily on the factory floor and the HR function since these directly engage with and affect (and are affected by) shopfloor workers in the company.

ChillCo operates two production sections on a single factory floor designed as a line production system in its large one-storey building. The factory fulfils what it calls 'small' (up to 3000 units) and 'large' (more than 3000 units) 'order quantities'. So the floor is virtually divided into two sections, the 'Modular Line' and the 'Band'. The Modular Line employs 20-25 machine operators or seamstresses who fulfil the small orders under a supervisor. The Band consists of 20 lines (which people at ChillCo also call 'bands'[84]). Each band is divided into 5-6 teams. Each team consists of around 6 machine operators who are officially known as 'team members' and 'team leader(s)'. Each team is led by a supervisor who is under the supervision of a Production Assistant.[85] The factory floor and its people are also under the close surveillance of the Production Executives and the Operations Manager who reports to the Factory Manager – the head of the factory of ChillCo.

At present ChillCo employs more than 1500 employees. 80 percent of ChillCo's workforce is, however, shopfloor workers. As is common in the industry more than 85 percent of

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[84] Actors in ChillCo use the English terms 'band', 'modular line', 'machine operators', 'team', 'order quantity' etc. even when they are speaking in Sinhala.
[85] On the floor the duties of these job positions are rather blurred. For example, the team leader is actually a seamstress. But she (perhaps he) may be the most talented and/or trustworthy seamstress in the team. The supervisor is also required to fulfil the duties of a seamstress' job while simultaneously performing the role of the supervisor. Even the Production Assistant who is responsible for smooth functioning of a few bands has to sew when a seamstress struggles with a particular job.

these shopfloor workers are women. Interestingly more than 90 percent of these women are unmarried and between the ages of 17 and 24. They are recruited, selected, trained, appraised, disciplined and (occasionally) promoted by and through the policies, processes, procedures and the multiple managerial apparatuses of (un)doing HRM at ChillCo. Therefore everyone in ChillCo, as I understand it, has a story to (re)narrate – a story about (un)doing the *lamai* identity in this work milieu. These stories, as we will encounter them in this chapter, are not isolated utterances. Instead they appear, disappear and are narrated as part and parcel of managing (female shopfloor) labour and indeed of (un)doing HRM at ChillCo.

Stories Narrated at ChillCo

The people I met at ChillCo articulate and rearticulate who they are and what they are doing at ChillCo. Therefore, as my fieldwork at ChillCo continued, they portrayed not only themselves but also their Other as well as policies, procedures and processes of ChillCo and indeed 'what ChillCo is all about'. During these interactive sessions managing (female shopfloor) labour at ChillCo and, more interestingly, doing, narrating and undoing the *lamai* identity – the areas or 'everyday happenings' of ChillCo which I was enthusiastic to see, listen to and be part of – emerged. Due to the nature of my access to ChillCo, I commenced my interactive sessions with the GM, the head of the company.

The GM, the father figure

 It is a sunny day. I am in the reception room of ChillCo.[86] In front of me there is a busy young female receptionist who I ask to tell the GM, Gamini, that I have arrived. The multi-dimensional room has a glass front door and wall. The room is decorated with a big poster of the female shopfloor workers of ChillCo. The workers are smiling at me! The poster narrates that 'Our difference is our human resource…'.

After a few minutes Gamini comes in. A friendly man in his early fifties, he greets me and invites me into his office. He knew of my visit as one of my friends, who knows Gamini personally, scheduled my interactive sessions at ChillCo. His office is a large square room partitioned mostly by glass. It is 'transparent', according to ChillCo's policies. Gamini sits on his office chair, opposite me. I encourage him to commence the encounter. I want to fulfil basically two requirements through this semi-structured interview – to gather general and background information about ChillCo and to further strengthen my access to the research site by creating a rapport with the GM.[87]

Gamini started his career in ChillCo's group as a personnel officer. He has more than twenty years experience in the company. So his version of ChillCo – its history, founders, present context, future challenges etc. – is linear and well articulated. As the encounter continues, lasting overall for more than fifty minutes, it seems to me that Gamini has pre-

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[86] To make this writing palatable and so readable I here adopt the present tense to narrate my past experiences at ChillCo.

[87] As I have mentioned in the methodology chapter (3) my interview with Gamini took place in English. My encounters with other actors in ChillCo unfolded in Sinhala.

prepared for the interview. But, despite this linearity and preparation, (the ways of doing) the *lamai* identity at ChillCo still emerges, as the encounter unfolds.

The relocation

As Gamini narrates the company had to face many difficulties in relation to labour/employment management during the relocation of ChillCo to its present place:

> We would have lost about [a] hundred to two hundred and fifty good skilled employees [as they refused to continue their jobs at the new location]. So, of course they didn't lose the career. They were absorbed [by other apparel companies in the group]. Then [we] had to recruit people. But they were notified [told] the story [of ChillCo]. Then we had to take replacements. We have to give [assign] a girl [to the old timers] and then they train that girl. Then that girl takes over [the job]…

Gamini worried about the loss of his 'good skilled employees' at the time of the relocation. However, the 'good skilled employees', during this transition period, are replaced in his narrative by 'girls'. So at the moment new shopfloor workers emerge in ChillCo they appear not as 'workers' but as 'girl'. The text suggests to us that the employees who perform jobs on ChillCo's factory floor are girls and not shopfloor workers *per se*. However, doing and narrating this 'girlish' collective identity of (female) shopfloor workers is complex here. Its colloquial nature is already suppressed at the moment the term/identity (dis)appears as it intermingles with formal, official processes/signifiers of doing HRM at ChillCo – recruitment, placement and training. So it emerges through the textual form of (doing) HRM at ChillCo.

This elusive nature of the way in which the term/ identity 'girls' (dis)appears in this English text and so at ChillCo, I argue, conceals or gives legitimacy to its colloquial, 'vulgar'

temperament, which we have seen in the previous chapter (4) as *ganu lamai* or *kello* (girls), in the industry. In fact the term 'girls' in this con-text connotes not *kello* (girls) as such. Instead it exceeds its denotative meaning – *kello*. And, consequently, it more generally connotes 'little ones', because when the text is in English the term *lamaya/lamai* is replaced by the term 'girl/girls'. We have seen this elsewhere, for example in the English prelude of *Sulang Kirilli* on the cover of the DVD where the term *lamaya* – referring to Rathie – in the Sinhala cinematic text becomes 'a girl' in this English text.[88]

The open door policy

But the utterance of the term 'girl' and hence doing the *lamai* identity in Gamini's version of ChillCo are not limited to historical events at the company. Even when describing current policy matters at ChillCo, especially the 'open door policy', he tends to narrate the *lamai* identity:

> We didn't want to have [a] single room closed in this factory. But then you know [you] have no option; there are certain rooms that had to be closed. That became four boardrooms, [the] cashier's room and [the] only [other] room is [the] counsellor's room where a girl can come and speak to [the counsellor] confidentially. All other rooms are not closed.

Here Gamini explains the policy of why ChillCo does not have doors in its offices and the exceptions to this 'open door' policy. However, within this policy matter, particularly as it intermingles with counselling – an important apparatus of (un)doing HRM at ChillCo – female shopfloor workers' identity still emerges as girls or *lamai*. One of the interesting aspects of this narrative is that while the counsellor's identity (who is also a woman)

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[88] This is also evident in the English prelude of *Kinihiriya Mal* as in its DVD back where Sanduni, a *lamaya* in Sinhala cinematic text, is portrayed as "A Garment Factory girl …".

remains as 'counsellor', the workers become girls/*lamai* even within her room. This is the case even though counselling is a highly regarded practice of (doing) HRM in ChillCo as well as elsewhere in the apparel industry. So this text, as the reader has already encountered in the cinematic texts, reminds us that gender is not the sole 'thing' that tends to do the *lamai* identity in the industry. Rather it is multi faceted. Indeed the text echoes how (doing) the identity interplays with other axes of power relations, as some researchers suggest (see for example Butler 1990; Collision 1992; Hall et al. 2007; Ybema et al. 2009).

Promoting a supervisor

However, this doing of the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers at ChillCo, as the reader has already seen, is rather subtle and concealed. It emerges on every occasion when Gamini attempts to explain managing employment if not (doing) HRM at ChillCo – through the deceiving textual form of (doing) HRM:

> … you know, when you are given a position, you know, I had been telling [female shopfloor workers] when a girl is promoted to be a supervisor 'now you don't sit on the machine. Be away from the machine, try to see the big picture' … these are the basic things we had been telling [the supervisors].… And then when I went there [to the factory floor] I won't see a single supervisor or production manager or the chairman [are] different to any other normal people.[89]

As this text suggests at the very moment a 'girl', a female shopfloor worker, is promoted to a supervisory position and hence is 'detached' from her sewing machine, her girlish if not *lamai* identity at ChillCo evaporates. Simultaneously she is encouraged to see the 'big picture' as opposed to the small or narrow picture, which the interior of the text implies, is

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[89] This effectively means the GM's desire to maintain equality among different actors in ChillCo.

seen by the shopfloor workers. This again reminds us that gender is not the sole 'thing' that tends to do female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* at ChillCo and so reminds us of the interplay between gender and class/occupation in relation to the formation of the *lamai* identity in the industry as many researchers claim in different socio-organizational contexts (Collinson 1992; Hall et al. 2007). However, this evaporation or effacement is not a natural occurrence, not the perishability of something perishable. Rather it is an 'intelligible' act of the same (doing) HRM which also conceals or legitimizes (doing) the *lamai* identity at ChillCo – when it (dis)appears through the textual form of (doing) HRM.

This interesting encounter with the GM, disregarding my original aims – gathering background information and strengthening access – persuaded me to further explore the puzzle of doing *lamai* while (un)doing HRM, as the phenomenon of HRM tends to do the workers' identity as *and* not as *lamai* at ChillCo at the same time. I therefore made an appointment to meet the Human Resources Manager (MHR) of ChillCo, as Gamini voluntarily introduced me and my project at ChillCo to him.

HRM is everywhere

It is a sunny day in May 2007, at around 10 o'clock. I am in the MHR's office. Like the GM's office it is a 'transparent' square room but relatively small. On one of the partitions there is a different poster of the same workers whom I 'met' at reception. The manager, Athula, is a graduate in HRM in his early thirties. He joined ChillCo as a Human Resources Executive a few years ago and subsequently became the MHR upon the resignation of the previous manager. My encounter – a semi-structured interview – with Athula, which is in

Sinhala, is aimed primarily at understanding the HR policies, procedures and processes of ChillCo.[90] It takes around one hour, although there are some interruptions as Athula has to attend to many daily chores – he is even responsible for transportation at ChillCo. Despite these interruptions and more importantly disregarding his enthusiasm to narrate managing human resources in a professional manner, the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers at ChillCo nevertheless emerges as our encounter continues.

Equal opportunities

Athula begins his version of managing employment/labour at ChillCo with a general introduction to job segregation, gender ratios, the nature of his department etc., as I encourage him to do. As the encounter unfolds, he moves to equal opportunities at the company.

> **MHR:** There is a policy in our company to treat everyone equally. Even if our *director*[91] comes there is only one *canteen* to eat. Even *lamai* eat there. We don't have separate transport [for workers]. We have the same buses. Employees come in those buses. And *lamai* also come in those buses. That is a value that ChillCo appreciates.
>
> **Dhammika:** Aren't there barriers in this regard?
>
> **MHR:** There are no barriers. Because this is advantageous all round. Because sometimes *lamai* come here and [they] don't call us as *Sir*.[92] *Lamaya* calls us as *aiya* [elder brother]. They call [us] any way they like. That is not really important to us.

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[90] As I have mentioned in the methodology chapter (3) I conducted two interviews, semi-structured and then unstructured, with the MHR. However, in this reading I line up these interviews in a logical flow, by bracketing their heterogeneous nature and time horizons for a moment, with a view to making the reading palatable for the reader.

[91] The relevant English words appear in the original Sinhala (oral) text. I continue this italicization throughout the chapter where it is necessary.

[92] There is a common practice in Sri Lanka for subordinates to address male managers as 'Sir' and female managers as 'Madam' or 'Miss', even though they communicate in Sinhala. But this practice is fading away particularly in private sector companies.

> *Lamaya*, we try to manage this company in the way where we get *lamaige* [girls']
> ideas. If *lamai* are frightened their ideas never come out.

As Athula narrates, ChillCo is concerned about 'equal opportunities'. So the company maintains the same canteen, the same buses etc. for all levels of its staff. However, even in this same canteen we don't meet 'team members', 'Sewing Machine Operators' or 'Quality Checkers' as in the official-written texts of HRM at ChillCo, but *lamai* – even though we do meet the Director. And the same busses provide transport for employees *and lamai* where non-managerial office staff, supervisors and the like become 'employees' and the (female) shopfloor workers remain as *lamai*. Thus 'equal opportunities' at ChillCo, as 'guaranteed' by its HR policies, are not equal opportunities as such, although unequal treatment of people in different strata of ChillCo's hierarchy is subtle and hidden. For example, as I discover the company provides company cars or loan facilities to buy cars for managers, the value of which differ according to managerial rank. So they can effectively avoid travelling on the same busses. Also there is a practice or norm of the company that, at the time of the shopfloor workers' lunch,[93] other employees generally do not go to the canteen to eat as the canteen is 'crowded'. Indeed the policy of equal opportunities appears as a palatable means of getting the work done smoothly since this is, as the MHR narrates, 'advantageous all round'. So (doing) the *lamai* identity here, I argue, not only ruptures this so-called policy – within which (female) shopfloor workers become *lamai* whereas others remain as employees – but also signifies the rupture of HRM – doing and undoing HRM – at ChillCo. On the other hand, it tells us that (doing) *lamai* at ChillCo is not something that

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[93] ChillCo provides half an hour lunch interval for the factory workers by dividing them into two groups (11.30 am to 12.00, and 12.00 – 12.30 pm). This grouping is due to the inadequate facilities at the canteen. After this 'rush hour', other employees go to the canteen for their lunch.

has already effaced from textual HRM in ChillCo, although it disappears in the *written* texts. Thus (un)doing HRM and its cohabitation with doing *lamai* at ChillCo are not limited to rather abstract policy matters. It is everywhere, even on the factory floor.

Managing the factory floor

As the encounter continues I ask the MHR about his department's relationship with the production floor. As he narrates:

> …we give the requirements of the factory floor. That is now we have the number of units that should be generated in a month. It is up to those units *lamayekuta* [a girl] can work [produce]. It is according to those units that our profits increase. Increasing the number of units means the company's profit increasing. Increasing number of units is a goal of the HR department. We directly link with *production* [floor]…

Until this comment neither the GM nor the MHR has (explicitly) explained to me whom these 'girls' if not *lamai* are. Nor do I ask who they are, as I am already exposed to or conditioned by this utterance and hence this signification. However, this particular excerpt suddenly unveils the hidden link between the term/signifier *lamai* and what/to whom it really refers at ChillCo. The capitalist logic of increasing number of units and indeed increasing profit, this so-called 'goal of the HR department' reminds us that these '*lamai*' are in fact factory women, their estranged labour at ChillCo (Marx 1959).

However, this significant role of female shopfloor labour does not lead to a change in its lowly identity in ChillCo or indeed in the wider apparel industry (see Devanarayana 1997; Lynch 2002; 2007; Hewamanne 2003; 2008). Rather it is also what does its collective identity as *lamai*. So it tells us about the way in which the workers are 'plugged into'

'scientifically' driven – through time and motion studies – numbers of units, what (female) shopfloor workers at ChillCo call their daily 'target' even when they speak in Sinhala. It also, paradoxically, signifies the manner in which the so-called 'goal of the HR department' of ChillCo is dominated by the everyday reality of its factory floor as it is aimed at increasing number of units, but not at (the well-being of) those who produce these units. So (un)doing HRM at ChillCo appears as a means of how best to use human *resources* (Legge 1995; 2005; Truss et al. 1997).

Executives, sewing girls and induction

However, this relatively colloquial term/identity – *lamai* – is always normalized and legitimized not only by apparatuses/signifiers of doing HRM such as orientation, job descriptions etc. but also by Athula's verbal descriptions of official-*written* texts of (doing) HRM which is in English. This is explicit in my unstructured interview with him which I conducted a few days after our first encounter, which emerged as a semi-structured interview. As Athula narrates:

> There is something like this. *Lamaige* [girls'] *orientation* is separated from the *executives* [induction]. This is not the person who conducts *lamaige* [girls'] *orientation*, [but] the person here [who conducts it – Athula points out some names in the written English text]. This is the one who does the *executives' induction*… Within the *garment* industry *mahana lamayage* [sewing girl's] goal is not specified. What the *mahana lamaya* [sewing girl] does is sew. No one has given them a *job description* correctly. But now in our system we have started.., start from the *lamayagen* [girl], start from the bottom and take upwards what duties they should perform.

Here Athula explains to me the 'facts' of an official-*written* document – of (doing) HRM or textual HRM at ChillCo – that embodies ongoing changes in the HR department

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implemented according to overall changes at ChillCo known as the 'Toyota System'.[94] This text, which is in English, does not embody the term *lamai* but sewing machine operators, team members and the like. These official names are, however, subtly substituted by the term/signifier *lamai* in its oral form in Sinhala. So the official-written text (in English) subjugates and (apparently) effaces this colloquialism in its oral form (in Sinhala) and subsequently, I argue, normalizes and legitimizes it. Thus the reader who encounters the official-written version/text in the context of ChillCo is unaware of this appearance of the signifier *lamai* as it (dis)appears through and is subsequently legitimized by the deceiving layers or textual forms of (doing) HRM at ChillCo. This (dis)appearance, therefore, problematizes the 'evaporation' of (doing) *lamai* in official-*written* texts, as the reader has already seen in the previous chapter (4). On the other hand, it more importantly tells us that the language(s) of HRM is not 'sheer' rhetoric but a process which conceals, normalizes and so legitimizes this doing of the *lamai* identity as it conceals exploitation of labour as Legge (2001; 2005) suggest us.

The mini team

This language game, this entwining of oral texts of (un)doing HRM with their official-written form of doing HRM at ChillCo, further (dis)appears as part and parcel of the 'Toyota System', as our encounter unfolds.

> **MHR:** This is the person at our lowest level [pointing at an official name – i.e., team member – in the text]. Now we call the *seamstress* as a *team member*. We have a

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[94] During my fieldwork ChillCo was planning and implementing a kind of Business Process Reengineering programme known as the Toyota System. The programme was initiated by the GM a few months prior to my arrival based on his experiences on a recent industrial tour of Japan. As he explained to me, very enthusiastically, there is a close relationship between the historical evolution of Toyota Inc. and that of ChillCo group.

> *mini-team* [consisting of 5-10 workers] concept. That means we don't have large teams, but small teams.

Dhammika: How do you select *team leaders*?

MHR: That is, if we take the production, maybe *lamai* with good efficiency. That is how we select *team leaders* for production and the like. If we take team members that means *mahana lamai* [sewing girls], this is the duty that they are supposed to do [he shows me duties listed in the text].

Dhammika: How do you select the *mahana lamai* [sewing girl]?

MHR: [Shows me the HR process in the text] This is the process of selecting *mahana lamai* [sewing girl]. Identifying the gap [between existing employees and future needs], mass communication [advertising the vacancy], interviewing…

This interesting encounter again echoes the cohabitation of this official-written text of HRM which is in English and its oral form in Sinhala. So what appears in the written text as 'team members' (seamstresses) is substituted by *lamai* and subsequently by *mahana lamai* (sewing girls). Therefore female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* in the context of ChillCo is always in process, always subject to supplement as it oscillates from one con-text to another. However, this (dis)appearance, this iterability and so this supplementation takes place through the deceiving means or textual forms of HRM – doing HRM and its managerial apparatuses such as recruitment, selection, interviews etc. – and indeed through its official-*written* texts. As such, its oral form effaces without trace (of its colloquial character), in the context of ChillCo. So the written text if not writing is what manages to usurp the process of (un)doing HRM and indeed of doing the *lamai* identity itself at ChillCo similarly to what Saussure (1995: 25) recounts to us: the spoken word is so intimately bound to its written image that the latter manages to usurp the main role, even though the written word/text is virtually symbolic.

Human resource, lamai and motivation

This doing and hence this supplementation takes place not only when the identity oscillates between official-written texts and its (unofficial) oral form, but even within the oral text itself. So for example, as appears in the latter part of the encounter, Athula narrates the annual plan of the HR department:

> It's okay to change plans a little. Because *manawa sampatha* [human resource] is the most valuable resource we have. We can't do anything without *lamai*. *Machines* don't work by themselves. So we are flexible about those [plans]…

Thus in everyday utterances in the context of ChillCo the term 'human resource' is substituted by *lamai* and vice versa. However, the colloquialism of these utterances and so (doing) the *lamai* identity is once more erased at the very moment they are traced, because in this process of supplementation 'human resource' – a signification of the textual form of (doing) HRM, textual HRM, at ChillCo – legitimizes *lamai* and indeed the 'vulgar' nature of the textual form of (undoing) HRM. On the other hand, during this process this text implies the (potential) power of *lamai* as opposed to its presumably feeble identity at ChillCo since although they are not 'human resource' they are the people who run the machines on the shopfloor.

Thus none of the ways in which I encounter doing HRM at ChillCo (*viz*. recruitment, selection, orientation etc.) is free from what Derrida (1997) calls this dangerous supplementation. Whenever the term/identity *lamai* is uttered or appears it – its colloquial character – is normalized and legitimized by doing HRM. On the other hand, whenever doing HRM appears or takes place it is supported and indeed contaminated, more or less,

by undoing HRM at ChillCo. This is equally true of ChillCo's highly regarded and glorified 'employee of the month' system. Indeed as Athula narrates:

> This is one of the motivation techniques [pointing at the poster on the wall when I ask about it]. All the *lamai* here became employee of the month in the year 2006. Each month *mahana lamayek* [a sewing girl] is selected as employee of the month. There are thirteen of these *mahana lamai* [sewing girls] here [on the poster]. We have taken them from November [2005] to December next year [2006]…Again in 2008 a new photograph of 2007 [employee of the month] comes here.

Thus the female shopfloor workers who excel as 'employee of the month' at ChillCo are not employees as such but *mahana lamai* (sewing girls) – the collective identity of female shopfloor workers in the con-text of ChillCo and indeed of wider apparel industry. So this motivation technique of doing HRM is, I argue, also contaminated by its undoing and indeed by (doing) the *lamai* identity itself. Despite the silence of (doing) *lamai* in official-written texts of HRM in ChillCo – where shopfloor workers are depicted as team members, machine operators and the like[95] – and its 'evaporation', as the reader has already seen, in the industry since the mid 1980s (doing) the *lamai* identity is an inextricable part of (un)doing HRM at ChillCo.

This doing *lamai* while (un)doing HRM, as I encounter it, has intruded into all aspects of the everyday affairs of ChillCo and its people, including the highly regarded role of the

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[95] This deception is somewhat ironic since these official job titles/identities, in most cases, are marked as 'gender neutral' if not 'male plus' and 'female minus' (see Hughes 2002) even when the text is in Sinhala (for example *kandayam samagika* - male team member; *kandayam nayaka* - male team leader etc. as in the Sinhala job description for shopfloor workers). Unlike English in Sinhala each of these signifiers has their feminine forms; for example *kandyam samagikawa* - female team member; and *kandayam naikawa* - female team leader. So this effacement also problematizes the coining of 'feminine jobs', which we have already seen in the previous chapter (4).

counsellor and counselling itself. Therefore, soon after my second encounter with the MHR, I met the counsellor in her room at ChillCo.

The dual burden

In a fairly dark and congested room with a door adjoining the 'open' office of the MHR, a woman in her late thirties is comfortably sitting front of me. She, Kamala, is the counsellor of ChillCo. Kamala is confident and friendly and wears a *sariya*. Behind her there is a big whiteboard that exhibits a table with numbers or codes. I greet Kamala and brief her on the purpose of my visit to ChillCo, and our encounter.

Kamala joined ChillCo in 1989 as a nurse. After a year she was appointed as the counsellor. With this new position, Kamala was asked to wear *sariya* by the GM, as he believed it gave her a mature look.[96] Although she is not a professionally qualified counsellor, her 'natural' ability for counselling gives her recognition as well as to the role of counselling at ChillCo. Despite counselling being regarded as one of the significant roles of (doing) HRM at the company, not only a particular version of counselling but even of doing the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers at ChillCo emerges as our encounter

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[96] At ChillCo no female shopfloor worker wore the *sari* whatever their age or marital status, although wearing *sari* is not prohibited for them. But it is perhaps 'culturally' unacceptable on the factory floor of ChillCo. However, female supervisors, managers and office staff wore *sari* according to their preference. It is a widely accepted norm that *sariya* is one of the most appropriate forms of dress for women in Sri Lanka (see Jayawardena 2000; Lynch 2007; Hewamanne 2008). This acceptance is also endorsed and praised by the GM in his encounter with me. As he puts it:

> She [Kamala] was [the] nurse. She was the person who brings me the complaints; you know the grievances of the normal people. So at that time, more than the HR manager, she's the channel. Because they [workers] go to the medical room and then have [a] chat with the nurse. Then I realised that I established [the counselling position] and then took away from the nurse role and gave her *saris*. So that she will have a mature look. You know [a] motherly kind of attitude and then recruited a nurse. The nurse's job and the counsellor's job is different.

unfolds. And even this version is disrupted and contaminated by the everyday affairs of the factory floor as well as (un)doing HRM at ChillCo.

Codes and lamai

As I am curious about the whiteboard with its different codes, just after clarifying the purpose of my encounter with Kamala, I begin the encounter formally by referring to this board.

> **Dhammika:** What is this *board*?
>
> **Counsellor:** What goes here is the *band* that every *lamayekma* [girl] in our *production floor* belongs to. The *band* the *lamaya* belongs to.., [from] *band* one to twenty one. From all those *lamai*, the *lamai* who have come [to work] today are determined [exhibited on the board].
>
> **Dhammika:** Why these small letters [codes]?
>
> **Counsellor**: Those letters are that *lamayage* [girl's] name and, *employee number*. Why the letters are put in different places is, if they are absent [I] remove those names [codes] on that day. [I] remove them and when they come the following day I put them back.
>
> **Dhammika:** Why is this record kept?
>
> **Counsellor**: Why we keep them is then we can directly know number of *seamstress* on the *production floor* from this [board].
>
> **Dhammika:** Why is that important for counselling?
>
> **Counsellor**: There is no importance of this for counselling. But if we want to know the number of *lamai* on the production floor, now in an emergency if we are asked information about *lamayekge* [a girl], whether this *lamaya* has come today or not.

As this encounter unfolds, *lamai* on the factory floor become seamstresses and subsequently return to their 'original' identity as *lamai*. Thus this text, on the one hand, reminds the reader that the female shopfloor workers whom s/he meets here in the counsellor's room at ChillCo are not workers as such but *lamai*. On the other hand, it

embodies how the role of counselling, disregarding its apparent importance in ChillCo, is disrupted or covered by the 'shadow' of the production floor – its norms, practices, constraints and indeed its everyday reality. In fact the clients of the counsellor are rendered as numbers or codes and indeed as what Spivak (1988b) suggests as 'objectified subjects' or selves as decided by and according to the desires of the production floor.

The role of the counsellor

This objectification and indeed doing the workers' identity as *lamai*, as we have already seen, is nonetheless in process. Thus it is not limited to the everyday 'chores' of the counsellor like keeping the whiteboard up to date. Rather it (dis)appears even as Kamala narrates her highly regarded role as counsellor:

> **Dhammika**: Can you describe your role?
>
> **Counsellor**: My role is.., my first job is counsellor. What I do first is, first job is, as soon as [I] come [to work] here I have to hire *lamai*. That is my first job. After hiring, then solving the problems *lamai* face in between.
>
> **Dhammika**: What are those in between problems?
>
> **Counsellor**: While I am hiring, *lamai* come with their problems. One by one, either their personal problems or production related problems. In such cases, what I do as soon as that hiring is over is I solve those *lamaige* [girls'] daily problems by talking with them…
>
> **Dhammika**: When a new person is recruited is there an *induction* on that day?
>
> **Counsellor**: There is an *induction* for that *lamaya* on the same day.
>
> [...]
>
> **Dhammika**: Generally, what sort of things [problems] are mostly reported?
>
> **Counsellor**: Hmm… what is mostly reported are *lamaige* [girls'] personal things. What is discussed mostly are personal problems. There are things like these too; it is difficult to achieve [production] *targets*, *supervisor* blamed [them for] being absent in previous day. [They] come and tell these things. So [I] talk about these things and I change the *lamayage* [girl's] mind. [I] explain to them what

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the job here is. There are some things where *lamaya* cannot help being absent. [But] there are some *lamai* who get an absence even for a cold....

As the reader experiences in this encounter the counsellor's role at ChillCo emerges as that of a 'healer' of the pressure of the production floor on female shopfloor workers. On the other hand, it appears as a process that takes place as part of or in between (un)doing HRM at ChillCo since the counsellor is required to fulfil many demands of doing HRM, for example hiring and induction of shopfloor workers. So counselling at ChillCo is not only under the 'shadow' of the norms, practices etc. of the production floor. It is also shaped if not disrupted by (un)doing HRM in the company.[97]

Thus as well as in many other socio-spatial spheres or arrangements at ChillCo during its counselling process the workers likewise become 'little ones'. The counselling at ChillCo thus ruptures the supposedly equal relationship between the client and the counsellor and positions the client as a 'little one' by assigning the mature, adult and indeed parental role to the counsellor. As a result, counselling at ChillCo is virtually limited to female shopfloor workers.

Lamai and the abused 'client'

Even a change in the marital status of female shopfloor workers – the 'target group' of counselling at ChillCo – may not alter their collective identity as *lamai* in the industry, as

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[97] This disruption also emerged during our encounter, as a newly recruited female shopfloor worker comes in to hand over her application to Kamala. Interestingly here also the workers' collective identity as *lamai* emerges, as Kamala has to respond to this newcomer's plan to come to work on her first day on a ChillCo's bus. As Kamala puts it: 'No *daruwo* [child, but here it connotes daughter] they [her fellow workers] don't allow you to get into the bus, because *lamai* [the fellow workers] don't know who you are'.

we have seen in the cinematic texts and more specifically in *Grahanaya*. This fact is equally evident in ChillCo. As Kamala narrates when I ask about critical problems that she had to face as the counsellor recently:

> **Dhammika:** What is the most serious problem that you have solved recently? I don't need the names, just to know the scenario.
>
> **Counsellor:** Now that is a personal problem. That *lamaya* is truly harassed by her husband. When that *lamaya* goes home after working here until 7 o'clock she is beaten. So there are problems.
>
> **Dhammika:** Is it because of working here?
>
> **Counsellor:** No, it's not because of working here. This *lamaya* goes home tired. So the *lamaya* goes tired [Kamala is uncomfortable telling this story to me]. What, their [men's sexual] desire is really difficult [to satisfy]. So certainly she is tired. So she has been beaten because of this [refusing to have intercourse]. Really she came with blue bruises on her body. After that we took her to a doctor for medication. Then [I] talked with her. After that I talked with her husband separately…

The shopfloor worker whom the reader confronts here is not only abused in her (patriarchal) family context but is also required to over work in her factory context. But these violent processes are not isolated. Rather as the text recounts to us they entwine with each other to marginalize female shopfloor workers in the socio-organizational milieu. Thus this shopfloor female worker, despite her marital status, is again not a mature woman or an able worker, but becomes a child/little one (*lamaya*) in this counselling process. This 'little one's' identity as worker (and wife) as narrated in the con-text of counselling, I argue, underpins these marginalization processes in wider Sri Lankan society. For example, it is still believed that 'non-severe' physical punishment is appropriate to rectify the 'inappropriate' behaviour of *lamai* (children), even though physical and verbal harassment of women and children is a formally punishable offence. So (doing) the *lamai* identity is

not as innocent as its (dis)appearance at ChillCo – might initially suggest and as we have seen in other encounters. Rather it is always complicit with other marginalization forces and processes in the industry and wider Sri Lankan society (see Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; Lynch 2002; 2007; Hewamanne 2003; 20008; Attanapola 2005). This is especially explicit when (doing) the *lamai* enters or leaves the Katunayake FTZ.

Cinematic reality and the quasi-prostitute

I later encourage Kamala to tell me about her experiences or what she knows about the Katunayake FTZ, as I want to reflect the multiple realities I have already been exposed to, particularly in the cinematic texts,[98] before I move to HotCo in the zone. As Kamala narrates:

> **Dhammika**: Kamala, have you worked in the [Katunayake] *Free Trade Zone*? Do you have any experiences there?
>
> **Counsellor**: I have heard about it.
>
> **Dhammika**: Are there *lamai* here who have worked there?
>
> **Counsellor**: Yes, there are.
>
> **Dhammika**: In what ways do they behave here?
>
> **Counsellor**: It is like this, let's say that *lamaya* comes much rotted, I am not aware about that, even if [she] does, [she] adapted according to the *lamai* who are here.
>
> **Dhammika:** What do you mean by if they come 'rotted'?
>
> **Counsellor**: That is sometimes I know about [one worker], because I had been told, that they [HotCo's managers] can't keep [that worker] there [at HotCo]. That

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[98] The need of this reflection is also induced by my personal experience as an undergraduate researcher and by my brief job experience as a trainee HR executive in the apparel industry. For example, in my undergraduate research project I attempted to explore organizational role stress of non-managerial workers in this FTZ. After several unsuccessful attempts to develop contacts with workers in the zone I had to move my fieldwork to the FTZ in Biyagama, because the Katunayake FTZ workers who I contacted found it hard to find free time and space to participate in my interviews. On the other hand, boarding house owners were rather arrogant and suspicious about me and a few of my colleagues who voluntarily assisted in the fieldwork. We were mostly identified either as lovers of the young women workers or as 'boys' just wandering around to 'trap' these 'girls'.

[particular] *lamaya* was sent here, cannot be fired, that *lamaya* is not resigning either.

Dhammika: That means in this company's branch there [the Katunayake FTZ]?

Counsellor: Yes, in that branch [HotCo].

Dhammika: What reasons, related to her behaviour?

Counsellor: No, not related to her work, [but because of] *boyfriends*. After that it affected the factory very much. [They] come here [HotCo] searching [for her]. *Three-wheel drivers*[99] come searching [for her]. So she wanted to leave [work] at 4.30. There are things like that. So she came here. I made it known to her that I knew about the incident…. Like this, actually that *lamaya*, what that *lamaya* is going in searching for is love.

Here as well female shopfloor workers' identity emerges as *lamai*. However, this identity, although appearing under the collective signature of *lamai*, is heterogeneous and even (internally) contradictory. As Kamala narrates, the '*lamai*' who work at ChillCo are less 'rotted' when compared with their counterparts in the Katunayake FTZ. Thus the zone female shopfloor worker portrayed here is the same worker whom we have already met in the Katunayake FTZ, more specifically the quasi-prostitute in *Grahanaya*, – who 'indulges in sex', is 'corrupted' etc. Thus when the term *lamaya/lamai* is uttered or (dis)appears in the con-text of ChillCo and indeed of Sri Lanka's apparel industry, even by ChillCo's highly regarded counsellor, it does not always or necessarily denote its relatively honoured meaning (indeed identity) in wider Sri Lankan society. On the contrary I argue that it is much more commonly the deferred presence of the workers' pejorative collective identity as *Juki lamai* or *Juki kello* (*Juki* girls) in Sri Lanka's apparel industry, particularly in the Katunayake FTZ – the 'zone of whores' (Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; Lynch 2002;

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[99] The social image of the three-wheel drivers in Sri Lanka, particularly in Colombo and the zone, is not very positive, as some of them are involved in antisocial acts, for example drug trafficking, as pimps etc.

2007; Hewamanne 2003; 2008). This is despite its absence in official-written texts of the industry, particularly of (doing) HRM, as we have already seen.

A further noticeable feature of doing *lamai* identity at ChillCo, as I encountered during it my engagement with ChillCo and its people, is that even though it always (dis)appears as part of or through the deceiving means or textual forms of (doing) HRM at ChillCo, it always shows its inevitable affiliation with the factory floor. So after several attempts I was able to meet ChillCo's Operations Manager (OM) and indeed gained access to the factory floor – the backbone of the company.

The shopfloor and the *lamai*

It is a warm day in the month of June. I am at ChillCo's factory. It is a noisy, air-conditioned, large area with horizontally organized production lines or bands powered largely by young female labour. My ears are troubled by the background music – Sinhala songs – which competes with the noise of sewing machines. I am happy as I am finally able to meet the OM. When I first attempted to contact him, soon after my first encounter with the MHR, he had gone on a trip and then had in eye infection. A friendly man in his early thirties now is front of me in the factory meeting room adjoining the factory floor. I call him Lucky.

Lucky joined ChillCo in the mid 1990s as a work study officer, soon after his Advanced Level examination. Then he worked in a Bangladeshi factory of the ChillCo group. Subsequently he was promoted to his present position under the Factory Manager of ChillCo. The aim of my initial encounter with Lucky – which emerged as a semi-structured

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interview conducted in Sinhala – is to understand the nature of the production process of ChillCo. This encounter is followed by observation sessions at the factory and the canteen facilitated by the OM on another day. Then I arranged another observation session at the factory which followed an unstructured interview with Lucky to further explore and understand managing (female) labour on the factory floor. Throughout these encounters (as well as observation sessions), the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers of ChillCo continued to emerge. Thus to make these scattered encounters – and indeed the scattered texts which emerge within and during the encounters – palatable I line up them in a logical flow, by bracketing their heterogeneous nature and time horizons for a moment.

Balancing the line

During my first encounter with Lucky, after encouraging him to tell me about his work experience and ChillCo, we move to the technicalities of the production floor. This move leads to doing *lamai* identity at ChillCo. As Lucky puts it:

> After calculating *Standard Minute Value* [SMV], that means after calculating how many minutes it takes to sew a garment, it [SMV] is calculated according to number of operators. That means if there are twenty six *lamai* in the line, if it's a twenty six minutes garment [twenty six minutes to sew the garment] to balance, it will take one minute per *eka lamayek* [one girl] to balance the line. That is initial balancing…

As this encounter unfolds the sewing machine operators on the factory floor gradually become *lamai*. Indeed the shopfloor workers subject to this calculation again are not workers *per se* but *lamai* who are 'plugged into' 'scientifically engineered' production lines. So the text, on the one hand, reiterates to the reader what the official texts, particularly of doing HRM at ChillCo, embody as operators and team members are actually

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lamai on the factory floor who are subject to its norms, processes and procedures such as SMV, line balancing etc. On the other hand, it again reminds to us that the absence of the term/identity *lamai* in official-written texts of (doing) HRM at ChillCo is not a total effacement of the *lamai* identity but its deferred presence. However, this absent presence of (doing) the *lamai* identity is not straightforward as it (dis)appears as part and parcel of the deceiving textual forms of (doing) HRM at ChillCo.

Gender and promotion

As my engagement with the factory floor moves through these interview and observation sessions I ask Lucky about a few young male workers who are working on the floor as sewing machine operators and the like. As he narrates:

> **OM:** [We] try to promote *pirimi lamai* [boys], try our best. There are two reasons. One is we try to give this [promotion] chance to *pirimi lamai* [boys]. That is because we need to balance the control of the floor a little. On the other hand..,
>
> **Dhammika:** What do you mean by that [balance the control of the floor]?
>
> **OM:** That means if there is any problem that is the place from where it first comes.
>
> **Dhammika:** Is it *pirimi lamai* [boys] who come out with problems?
>
> **OM:** No, no. It doesn't mean coming out with problems. Really [they] don't bring problems at the moment. If we think about the future, if we think about unions and such things, if there is any problem at any place, they have more power to convince *lamai*, convince *ganu lamai* [girls]. Because of that [we] focus a bit and see who leads the team and we promote them. If we want to promote a supervisor, we watch [them] carefully, watch how they work, and promote one person. We promote them little by little to places like *SPC* [Statistical Process Controller].
>
> **Dhammika:** What do you mean by *SPC*?
>
> **OM:** *SPC* means.., in a line there are two [job categories] which are a little higher than the *operators*….
>
> **Dhammika:** Isn't there any need [that would arise] from *ganu lamai* [girls] that means from a promotional aspect?

> **OM:** Should do. Hmm, that is done after a little consideration. That means if we see they [*ganu lamai*] are progressing we promote [them]. It is rarely that we search for [girls to] promote. That is not discrimination. [We] have given a little better chance to *pirimi lamai* [boys], that is because [we need to] balance [the control of the floor] a little. We have to do two things. Either [we] should not recruit *pirimi lamai* [boys] or if we do recruit *pirimi lamai* [due to a lack of female workers, as the OM later mentions] we should be able to look after them…

This interesting encounter embodies the way in which female shopfloor workers' collective identity oscillates between '*lamai*' and 'operator' and indeed between these workers' 'unofficial' and 'official' identities in the industry. During this oscillating and hence supplementing process the text also distinguishes *pirimi lamai* (boys) from *ganu lamai* (girls). Despite this shift if not apparent rupture of the *lamai* identity, the text reminds the reader that the group to which the term/signifier *lamaya/lamai* really refers in the con-text of the factory floor is not *pirimi lamai* (boys). Instead it is *ganu lamai* and indeed female shopfloor workers – the majority in Sri Lanka's apparel industry (Jayaweera 2002; de Silva 2002). Indeed when the OM utters 'if there is any problem at any place, they (*pirimi lamai* – boys) have more power to convince *lamai* (and so) convince *ganu lamai* (girls)' this unrealised 'truth' of the signifier/identity *lamai* at ChillCo is exposed.

So, despite the feminization of the industry and its factory floor in particular, the text reminds the reader, that 'boys' are a powerful group on ChillCo's factory floor – as they are (potential) 'trouble makers' who might form trade unions and initiate trade union action – even though they are the minority in the industry. When the OM says 'If we think about the future, if we think about unions and such things…' it echoes ChillCo's anxiety about the boys' potential trouble makers' role in the industry (see for example Devanarayana 1997;

Silva 1997). This potential trouble makers' role and so the relational power and its gender dynamics tend to give them a better 'chance' as far as promotion and indeed (un)doing HRM in the context of the factory floor in ChillCo is concerned. Therefore what (dis)appears as promotion on the factory floor is not the promotion that appears in and is guaranteed by the official texts of (doing) HRM in ChillCo. It is, on the contrary, a contaminated policy and practice – undoing HRM – which is aligned and shaped by relational power and the gender dynamics of the industry as well as of wider Sri Lankan society. So it implies a rupture of 'equal opportunities' as an aspect of (doing) HRM at ChillCo and hence mirrors the agenda of gender of HRM as feminist critics of HRM suggest (see Woodall 1996; Dickens 1998; Healy 1999; Coates 2004).

However, the *lamai* identity, as evident in this text as well as in the counsellor's and MHR's versions of doing *lamai* at ChillCo, is also a double-bind (Derrida 1988b). On the one hand, it assigns a lowly, feeble identity to those who are subject to its reference – female shopfloor workers – at ChillCo. On the other hand, it also signifies the (potential) power of female shopfloor workers who keep the shopfloor going.

The supervisor and the lamai

This 'truth' of the (potential) power of female labour on the factory floor emerges explicitly when Lucky narrates the relationship between shopfloor workers and their supervisors:

> There is an indirect contribution. That means if the *supervisor* is friendly, *lamai* will never allow the *supervisor* to fall behind [underperform]. They somehow try to keep up [to achieve the target]. If there are problems between the *supervisor* and the *lamai* there the relationship is low. Those *lamai* are not at the level where they will somehow try to keep up.

Again here female shopfloor workers (identity) emerge as *lamai* while their supervisors (identity) remain unchanged. However, the *lamai* whom the reader encounters here are not the feeble little ones as they have been depicted elsewhere. Rather they are able workers – who ensure that supervisors meet their targets but even, more importantly, who are capable of undermining the supervisor, if they wish to do so. So this same signifier/identity *lamai* not only signifies and portrays feeble little ones who are 'plugged into' 'scientifically' engineered factory floor but also embodies its negation by keeping the reader who faces the identity is in a blur.

The uniform, the best worker and categorization

However, this possibility of *collective* power of female shopfloor workers is also its impossibility at ChillCo. Its fragmented nature and hence its rupture is always there in the collective identity/signature *lamai* itself, or it is already marked by the managerial apparatuses of ChillCo. But this rupture and so this impossibility of collective power emerges not as part of demographic differences between workers such as their age, marital status etc., although these are not insignificant. Instead it is an inevitable part of or due to (un)doing HRM at ChillCo – its multiple apparatuses, for example the uniform, motivational strategies etc. – which breaks up *collective* subject to *individual* selves. Indeed as Lucky serendipitously unveils when I ask about some of the shopfloor workers who are in uniform:

> **OM:** The uniform was not given, now the new *lamai* are not given [a uniform].
> **Dhammika:** What is their attitude towards the uniform? Do they like or do they like to work without [the uniform]?

> **OM:** … Hmm, not given in that way for some time. That means it [the uniform] was not looked into. It was given to checking *lamai*, [goods] *issue girls*.[100] Further there are *lamai* to check the steam mark. It was given to these *lamai*. It was given as three [workers] per one *line*. That category is [these job categories are] a little different…

As this text tells us those who appear under the collective signature of *lamai* are a fragmented and heterogeneous group at the ChillCo. But this heterogeneity if not rupture of this group, of its collectivism, which (dis)appears under the signature of *lamai* is not due to its intrinsic nature. In contrast I argue that it is, in the context of the factory floor, an imposed heterogeneity which is marked according to the everyday reality of ChillCo and its factory floor. However, this rupture and its 'real' marker – (un)doing HRM – are unseen on the factory floor. Instead in this text and hence on the factory floor the reader can meet different workers if not *lamai* who are (and not are) in many different uniforms – checking girls, issues girls etc.

This rupture also emerges when Lucky narrates selecting the best worker – the 'employee of the month' – when I ask about this glorified practice of (un)doing HRM at ChillCo:

> Here more weight is given to the sewing side. If we speak about an operation, something like joining the two seams of this trouser [for example], here we select who is the *hodama lamaya* [best girl] in this factory. It is given to that worker… This record comes in the *lamayage* [girl's] name. It is a voucher worth Rs. 1000.[101]

This text not only suggests to the reader the way in which the employee of the month, as in the official-written texts of (doing) HRM at ChillCo, becomes *hodama lamaya* on the factory floor. But also, more importantly, it embodies how HRM marks the rupture of

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[100] The name 'issue girls' which is used in Sinhala is identical to the English term 'issue girls'. It describes (female) workers who deliver goods – cut materials – from the cutting section to the lines.
[101] Roughly £6. Again, this is a rather significant amount of money in Sri Lanka.

female shopfloor workers and indeed of their collective selves on the factory floor. So this motivational strategy, this demarcation of *hodama lamaya* (best girl) from the rest, and this intensification of internal competition among the workers themselves, on the one hand, unveils the fragile nature of teams, team members and team work in official texts of HRM at ChillCo when we arrive on the factory floor. Further it marks and strengthens the rupture in workers' collective identity and hence tends to hinder their (potential) collective power and solidarity at ChillCo and indeed in wider apparel industry. So once again what we confront as managing employment/labour and indeed HRM is not a fixed or fixable phenomenon. In contrast it is a series of moving events or texts – woven, interwoven and negotiated by many different actors in ChillCo as part and parcel of their everyday affairs in this work milieu – in which sing(s) supplements the thing(s) itself (Derrida 1997).

As my (dis)engagement with ChillCo's factory floor and its people continues, I also realize that doing the *lamai* identity as well as marking its rupture is not the 'sole' act of organizational actors who are in the upper strata of ChillCo's hierarchy (*viz.* the GM, the OM, the MHR etc.). Rather those who are in a supervisory and similar capacities are equally eager to do and be accountable for and so are part of this process. Thus during my interactive sessions at ChillCo's factory, I get the OM's consent to interview factory employees who are in supervisory and similar grades – and those who are directly involved with shopfloor workers. The OM allows two supervisors and a Production Assistant (PA) to talk to me in the factory meeting room. Importantly, these supervisors as well as the PA started their career in the industry as shopfloor workers. So they are female shopfloor

workers who have been 'stood up'[102] (*nagittanawa*) on the basis of their ability, loyalty, enthusiasm etc. These tiny steps up their 'career ladder', however, have helped them to efface their collective identity in the industry as *lamai/lamaya*. This effacement subsequently moulds them as narrators of the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers in ChillCo.

Being in both worlds

In a square room, adjoining the factory floor, a young woman in jeans and a t-shirt and I are sitting around an oval shaped table. Through the front glass wall I can see the floor and busy shopfloor workers, mostly young women who work under the surveillance of supervisors, PAs etc. I take a few minutes to build a rapport with this young woman where she explains her experiences at ChillCo. She is a supervisor on the main production floor what people in ChillCo call the Band. She is friendly and chatty, in her mid twenties and unmarried. I call her Amali.

Amali started her career as a 'helper'[103] in ChillCo in 1998. Due to some family problems, as Amali narrates, she resigned from the factory in 2005 and subsequently rejoined it as a supervisor in 2006. In my mind I know I am taking Amali's work time as she has been 'released' for this interview by the OM. So our encounter, which is in Sinhala, only lasts around twenty minutes. Even during this short time period, the OM unexpectedly visits the room for 'a moment', to me at least pretending that he is searching for something. This

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[102] 'Stood up' (*nagittanawa*) in ChillCo and HotCo connotes two meanings: promotion as well as literally stood up as the supervisor works standing.
[103] The name 'helper' which is used in Sinhala is identical to the English word 'helper'. At ChillCo it signifies a person who provides assistance mainly to seamstresses.

'unwelcome' visit and indeed surveillance, as I experience it, not only changes Amali's enthusiastic involvement with the encounter to some extent. It also reminds me of the constraints of generating data in the 'real' research setting. Despite these inescapable time and spatial constraints, Amali takes me to an as yet unrealised plain of (un)doing *lamai* as well as (un)doing HRM at ChillCo.

The supervisor's role

Following our friendly dialogue about Amali's background and my project in ChillCo, I ask her about her role as a supervisor:

> **Supervisor 1**: Our task is to achieve the production [targets]. In addition to, that is from factory's side, there are things to be considered from *lamaige* [girls'] side as well.
>
> **Dhammika**: What is there to be considered from *lamaige* [girls'] side?
>
> **Supervisor 1**: Now, from *lamaige* [girls'] side, how. Can *lamaya* work [properly]? What sort of situation is [she] in? Does that *lamaya* have problems? Hmm.., if someone doesn't sew properly now, [but] in the past [she] worked well. Now, she had stopped [doing her job properly] in between. How does it happen in such instances? Why does it happen? Sometimes it happens due to problems. [They are] mentally suffering.
>
> **Dhammika**: Due to what sort of reasons do they mentally suffer mostly?
>
> **Supervisor 1**: *Lamai*?
>
> **Dhammika**: Yes.
>
> **Supervisor 1**: In sometimes many family problems mostly arise.., problems of husbands, boyfriends, family problems.
>
> **Dhammika**: Now, are you told about such things [problems]?
>
> **Supervisor 1**: *Lamai* are very close to me… I am the one who keeps the *lamai* very close. [I] even take my meals together with *lamai*.

This text refers to many different 'happenings' at ChillCo and in the wider socio-organizational milieu – from 'proper' work if not the efficiency and effectiveness of shopfloor workers to their mental strain to worker-supervisor relationships – although Amali does not use this language. Moreover, despite its plurivocal nature, the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers nevertheless emerges as the encounter unfolds. Like many other encounters which the reader has already come across, this text also reiterates that what the term/signifier *lamai/lamaya* signifies in the con-text of ChillCo and indeed of Sri Lanka's apparel industry is not shopfloor workers as a whole but *female* shopfloor workers more specifically, even though there are a small number of men – as a percentage less than 15 percent – who work on the factory floor. This 'truth' of the signifier/identity *lamai* is further affirmed when Amali says '[shopfloor workers] come out in many cases, problems of husbands, boyfriends' – the text is silent about the workers' 'wives and girlfriends'.

As the encounter further narrates, Amali's previous job on the shopfloor as a helper and then as a seamstress – and thus her collective identity as *lamai* in ChillCo do not disturb her utterance of the term *lamai* and so her doing of female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* at ChillCo. Rather it is repetitive and taken for granted throughout the encounter, partly because she is no longer part of that collective identity. Indeed her supervisory position tends to put her in a position wherein she is supposed to play an adult/mature role in ChillCo whereas female shopfloor workers are supposed to be or remain as *lamai* – little ones. This again reminds us of the interplay between the workers' occupation/class and their gender (identity) in the formation of their *lamai* identity in the

industry. But this interplay as well as (doing) the *lamai* identity always (dis)appear through and are disturbed by (un)doing HRM in ChillCo.

Motivation

As our encounter unfolds, I ask Amali about motivation, as I am quite doubtful about the MHR's version of (doing) HRM in ChillCo, particularly when it comes to the factory floor. Amali is in a good position to indicate or if not decide what really motivates her 'subordinates' on the factory floor in which the multiple apparatuses of (doing) HRM appear as rather symbolic processes, a fact which is also endorsed by the OM when he explains to me how ChillCo promotes shopfloor workers into supervisory position. As she narrates:

> **Dhammika:** Amali, have you heard about the term motivation? That means to encourage them [workers]. What type of things do you use to encourage them to work?
>
> **Supervisor 1:** Sometimes we hold small competitions within the team.
>
> **Dhammika:** Hmm, that means competitions that are not in the company, [but] within your team?
>
> **Supervisor 1:** Mostly the company also has [them].
>
> **Dhammika:** No, do you hold [them] separately?
>
> **Supervisor 1:** Yes, among us [team]. Now, if I.., normally I, there is a PA, Shrima, we talk with each other [about this competition]…
>
> **Dhammika:** Now, does the management know about this [competition]?
>
> **Supervisor 1:** No one knows [Amali is giggling].
>
> **Dhammika:** Your own incentive?
>
> [She is still giggling]
>
> **Supervisor 1:** *Sir*,[104] please don't put it [this fact] to that [the interview data].[105]

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[104] In the Sri Lankan context, people in positions such as teacher, lecturer and the like are addressed as Sir or Madam/Miss by their fellow citizens.

[105] Here Amali is with a view that I am going to expose this fact to the management of ChillCo as she is, like many, quite unclear about my role in ChillCo, as I have experienced it during my fieldwork at the company.

This apparently innocent competition exemplifies the unrealized apparatuses of managing (female) shopfloor labour and indeed *un*doing HRM in ChillCo. It also implies how intensify is the competition is within so-called teams on the factory floor. Besides it also tells us of the supervisor's arbitrary power over her subordinates. Indeed the supervisor (and her PA) – who plays the adult/parental role – decides what really motivates their 'subordinates' if not *lamai* on the shopfloor. The arbitrary power of the supervisor, I argue, marks the rather symbolic if not feeble nature of (doing) HRM at ChillCo – its incentive packages, motivational techniques etc. as in textual HRM. This feeble nature is so vivid particularly when multiple apparatuses of doing HRM come to the factory floor and so when they are 'deployed' to manage (female) shopfloor labour, as also evident in the OM's verdict about managing (female) shopfloor labour. Indeed this entire 'competition' marks and mirrors the rupture of HRM – doing and undoing HRM – at ChillCo. Nevertheless this arbitrary power, the text tells us, is also a subtle means that sustains the continued existence not only of (un)doing HRM but also of doing the workers' collective identity as *lamai* on the floor.

We are not lamai!

Thus, as the encounter unfolds, I ask Amali why they call workers *lamai*. As with many in ChillCo her justification is blurry. But after this query, interestingly, this ex-shopfloor worker insists to me that she is no longer part of that collective identity.

> **Supervisor 1:** If [we] compare a person works in a bank[106] and in our factory, I think,
> who works in our factory earns higher salary. That person in a bank, normally that

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[106] In wider Sri Lankan society bankers are known as skilled and highly paid employees.

person perhaps works with [his/her] brain. But we [supervisors] tire our brain as well, but *lamai* tire [their] bodies. We [supervisors] work using our brain… What *lamai* mean, generally [they] come in the morning [and go] evening, [they] work for] eight hours. They have a small part [responsibility] of a small garment. Their responsibility is only for that, restricted there. Their responsibility is only within that area. Now, supervisor means this whole thing. It is us who has to be looking to everything. So this [responsibility] has to be explained to *lamai*. Even though their responsibility is in this small thing, that will not [keep] this work [factory going].

This interesting text compares and contrasts the supervisor's and (female) shopfloor workers' role on the factory floor. In this comparison it trades upon social discourse surrounding bankers to boost the supervisor's role. This intertextual link consequently portrays the supervisor's role as similar to a banker's role, although the former role is performed on the factory floor in the apparel industry. So like a banker, the text recounts to the reader, the supervisor works with her brain and indeed is both resourceful and highly paid. Female shopfloor workers, on the contrary, work with their bodies. The text, its interior, thus indicates that they are unskilled. Moreover, unlike supervisors, they are only accountable for an insignificant part of the production floor.

Assigning this ancillary role to female shopfloor workers and hence doing their collective identity as *lamai* if not, what Knights and Pullen (2007) suggest, a life not worth living not only negates the MHR's or textual HRM's version of 'human resources' if not 'team members' who the reader has already encountered. This doing of the *lamai* identity also tells us how the signifier/identity *lamai* signifies the lowly, pejorative status of female shopfloor workers as it oscillates from one con-text to another by problematizing its apparently innocent and generalized nature in the everyday utterances of ChillCo. So the

text reminds the reader that the pejorative meaning(s)/temperament of the signifier/identity *lamai* is only ever a spatiotemporal delay – its deferred presence – as it is uttered or (dis)appears in other texts and contexts in ChillCo.

Lamai are everywhere

Use of the term *lamai* to refer to and hence doing (female) shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* is also vivid throughout my encounter with the other female supervisor, Thamara, whom I interview after Amali. Thamara is the only supervisor of what people in ChillCo call the 'Modular Line' – the line which fulfils demands for small orders. She joined ChillCo in 1999 as a machine operator. After one year she was prompted to her present position. This friendly, motherly looking but young supervisor (she is in her late twenties) who wears a *sariya* takes a rather careful if not vigilant approach to our encounter which lasts about 20 minutes. Despite this vigilant approach, however, when Thamara attempts to explain to me the nature of her line she exemplifies how common the utterance of the term *lamai* is to represent (and to do) the collective identity of (female) shopfloor workers in ChillCo:

> What means a *Modular Line* is, *Sir*, it is fed small *order quantity*. That means [an] *order quantity* around 500 [to] 600, [that amount of order quantities] are fed. So if the *Band* is fed that amount of [small] *quantity*, it finishes immediately, when it is *fed*, because there is a lot of *lamai* in [the Band]. In that [in the Band] *eka lamayek* [one girl] is given [around] three *operations*.

Thus, as in other encounters, here shopfloor workers on the floor once again become *lamai*. However, Thamara's vigilant approach always keeps the encounter within certain

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boundaries. Even when I ask about her and other actors' utterance of the term *lamai,* for example, she more delicately negates the question itself:

> **Dhammika**: Why do you call *lamai* [to shopfloor workers]? What do you think about [addressing the workers as *lamai*]? People in here call *lamai* [to shopfloor workers]?
>
> **Supervisor 2**: That means?
>
> **Dhammika**: [Why do you call] *lamai* to [shopfloor] workers?
>
> **Supervisor 2**: [They] may be called as [team] *samajikayo* [members]. It is easy, so [we are] used [to it].
>
> [She is laughing].

So, despite Thamara's own utterance of the term *lamai,* when this utterance if not doing of the *lamai* identity is questioned, she negates it. Interestingly this negation, as the text embodies, is done by taking refuge in the signifier/identity 'team member' as in textual HRM at ChillCo. So not only in the managers' offices but also on the factory floor of ChillCo, doing HRM – its multiple texts and significations – appears as a palatable means or ethical face that conceals, normalizes and legitimizes doing shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* in different socio-spatial arrangements of the company.

However, this 'effacement' of (doing) the *lamai* identity is ephemeral. Like Amali, the PA whom I interview after Thamara also defies it. Indeed like Amali she brings me to another unrealised plane of doing *lamai* identity in ChillCo, as she attempts to contrast her role with that of the supervisors as well as (female) shopfloor workers, disregarding her 'cold' approach to the encounter.

Sumudu, the PA

As one of my busy days in ChillCo's factory unfolds, a tough looking woman in a skirt and a jacket replaces the friendly supervisor's – Thamara – role as a narrator of ChillCo and its people. She is Sumudu, a PA at ChillCo. Sumudu joined ChillCo in 1989 as an 'issue girl'. In 1995 Sumudu became a supervisor and subsequently she was promoted to her PA position in 2001. Sumudu is unmarried, in her mid-thirties. She gives very short answers to my queries, although I encourage her to narrate her version of ChillCo. Despite this 'cold' approach to the encounter, like many in ChillCo, Sumudu utters the term *lamaya/lamai* to refer to female shopfloor workers throughout the encounter, which lasts around 15 minutes.

Supervisors and lamai

So this utterance is disturbed neither by Sumudu's short answers nor by her career lineage as a former shopfloor worker, when she narrates her role as a PA in the factory:

> **PA:** While watching [monitoring] supervisors, [I] help to control *lamai*. That means, if there is something that supervisor can't do, we go there and look at [it].
> **Dhammika:** That means, look at means, do you sew that [garment]?
> **PA:** Yes, [I] do it as well. If *lamayek* [a girl] has a problem [I] talk with [her]. Sometimes supervisors can't talk [to her]…
> **Dhammika:** What is meant by the supervisor can't?
> **PA:** That means, *lamai* who have personal problems. Normally, those kinds of things are mostly told to us. Because most of [my] supervisors are *pirimi lamai* [boys]. As a result, they [female workers] come to [me].

In this encounter Sumudu uses the term *lamai* to refer to shopfloor workers. This 'gender neutral' term does not tell us that what it really refers to or denotes is *ganu lamai* (girls) or *pirimi lamai* (boys). However, as we already have experienced in other encounters, here also the apparent gender neutrality of the term/identity evaporates when Sumudu happens

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to describe why the workers come to see her to discuss their personal problems. Indeed those who come to see the PA are not *lamai* but *ganu lamai* (girls) who are reluctant to tell to male supervisors these problems. Further this text embodies the ways in which the PA categorises, distinguishes and manages the supervisors and the shopfloor workers – 'watching/ monitoring' supervisors and 'controlling' *lamai* – in which the workers become *lamai* whereas the official identity of supervisors remains unchanged. As such the text also exposes the different ways of managing employment in the factory milieu where the workers are being *controlled* whereas supervisors are being monitored. Indeed it tells how fragile is the so-called 'equality' of managing employment – narrated in textual HRM in ChillCo.

Level of lamai

Thus the text, as it unfolds, recounts to us that this control-oriented approach to managing (female) shopfloor labour is not only a necessary part of (un)doing HRM on ChillCo's factory floor. It is also more crucially goes with or is due to the 'level' of shopfloor workers on the floor and indeed their very (non)existence as *lamai* in ChillCo and so in wider apparel industry. As Sumudu narrates it:

> **Dhammika:** Do you control *lamai* in the same way you control a supervisor?
>
> **PA:** No, now [we] can't get *lamai* to the supervisor's level. [We] need to get *lamai* to a different level. [We] can't get [them] to the supervisor's level.
>
> **Dhammika:** What's the reason for that, as you think?
>
> **PA:** Reason is.., a supervisor means.., [his/her] knowledge is little high [quite advanced]. *Lamai* here have limited knowledge. [They are] *mahana lamai* [sewing girls].

There are some *lamai* who do [the work] when they were told twice. There are some *lamai*, who do [the work] by watching [it].., That type of *lamai*.[107]

The female shopfloor workers whom the reader confronts in this text – which reminds us of Amali's version of (doing) *lamai* at ChillCo – are neither 'human resources' nor 'team members' as in official-written texts of (doing) HRM. Instead they are *lamai* or *mahana lamai* (sewing girls) who have 'limited' knowledge about what they are supposed to do in the company. So the text recounts their insignificant role or 'level' on the factory floor in which they 'professionally' stagnate. In this con-text what 'different level' means here is, I argue, nothing but the lower level assigned to female shopfloor workers in socio-organizational strata in ChillCo. The text therefore embodies the presence of the workers' 'lowly' identity, *mahana lamai* (sewing girls) – which emerged, as we have seen in the previous chapter (4), at the very movement the feminization process began – and so problematizes its 'evaporation' in official-written texts of (doing) HRM in the 1990s. Further the text tells us how this lowly identity and the workers' 'ignorance' are complicit with and justify the way in which they are managed on the floor – which echoes, more or less, the 'monarchic-type' wage labour relations in the industry which we have seen in chapter 2. Indeed the text reiterates to the reader that the (apparent) innocence of the term/identity *lamai* in ChillCo is the deferred presence of the lowly identity of *mahana lamai* (sewing girls). Nevertheless this 'lowly' disposition is also, as we have seen it, not fixed or fixable, but is always in process, awaiting the next supplement.

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[107] This effectively means Sumudu's interpretation of the ways in which shopfloor workers adapt to and learn their jobs – either based on instructions given to them or through observation – in the factory.

As my (dis)engagement with ChillCo and its people, particularly on the factory floor, continues I experience that shopfloor workers themselves also use the term *lamaya*/*lamai* to refer to themselves each other. So they themselves, as we will seen in the next section, do their collective identity as *lamai*, despite its possibility to depict their objectification and 'lowly' level or disposition in the industry as the term oscillates from one con-text to another.

When the '*lamai'* speak up

After my encounters with the supervisors and the PA, the OM allows me to interview shopfloor workers. I begin my encounter with a seamstress-cum-'team leader'. I call her Chamila. Chamila is in her late thirties. She is married and has a nine year old child. She looks mature, even though she wears a gown to adhere to the norm of the factory. Chamila joined ChillCo in 2002 as a seamstress. She also has more than five years' experience in Dubai and Mauritius as a seamstress and sample room worker. Chamila is calm and answers my queries carefully. When I ask whether she is comfortable if I use the recorder, she calmly tells me 'that's okay as I don't say anything wrong [about ChillCo]'. So Chamila's initial approach to the encounter signals to me that she leaves a large part of what she knows and has experienced in ChillCo as well as in the industry as unsaid.

Team members

Despite this limit to my encounters with Chamila, within which she seems to be watchful about what is to be said (and not to be said), her utterance of the term *lamai* still emerges. So this 'never-said' facet of her story comes out even when Chamila describes her role in ChillCo:

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Dhammika: What sort of thing do you have to do?

Chamila: We have to do the role that we are given. If there are 6 or 7 *lamai* in my team, [I] have to help them. Somehow the work has to be taken [done] by [using] them.

As narrated in the text, Chamila utters the term *lamai* to refer to her so-called team members in ChillCo's factory, despite her membership of the same team or same group, *lamai*. This utterance and hence this doing of the *lamai* identity is also vivid in my encounter with another female shopfloor worker – a seamstress. Nevertheless she kindly refuses my request to record our encounter digitally which restricts my memory of the encounter to the notes I took. My 'scattered notes', however, exemplify her generalized utterance of the term *lamai* to refer to her colleagues – again the so called members of her team in the factory.

The term *lamai* then is commonly uttered even by shopfloor workers themselves to represent and do their collective identity. Nevertheless it is supplemented by (and supplements) official terms/identities such as machine operator, seamstress, members, team members, human resources and the like as well as 'unofficial' terms/identities like *akka* (elder sister) *nangi* (younger sister), *daruwo* (child, daughter/son) etc. in formal as well as informal, official as well as unofficial/local and oral as well as written texts, as it oscillates from one con-text to another. This term/identity *lamai*, as it is uttered and so done by the workers themselves, is presumably due to the fact that they are either conditioned to it or unconscious of this doing. But this conditioning does not mean that they are pleased about the utterance and indeed (doing) their identity as *lamai*. Nor does it mean that it remains

unchallenged. Rather the workers seem to deny the utterance and indeed (doing) the identity, when they are notified of it.

Workers' resistance and un-doing lamai

Thus, at the moment this usage is questioned, it is also negated by Chamila, despite her utterance of the term *lamai*:

> **Dhammika:** Do you call your colleague as *lamai*?
>
> **Chamila:** We call [them] by their names.
>
> **Dhammika:** [You] use names. How you all are called?
>
> **Chamila:** By whom?
>
> **Dhammika:** Now, like the supervisor, do they use names?
>
> **Chamila:** Call by name or call as *nangi* [younger sister] or *malli* [younger brother]. In most cases I am called as *akka* [elder sister] by my supervisor. Everyone has that humbleness.
>
> **Dhammika:** As a whole, are you called as *lamai* in general?
>
> **Chamila:** Most time they [supervisors] call [the worker] as *akka* [an elder sister] if it [the worker] is an elder person, [the term *akka* is used] even by them [supervisors]. Others are called by [their] names.
>
> **Dhammika:** In generally, when you call, do you use '*lamai* of our team'?
>
> **Chamila:** Yes, sometimes it may be used.
>
> **Dhammika:** Why do you call as *lamai*?
>
> **Chamila:** It may be used by us as *ape kandayame samajikayo* [members of our team].

This encounter suggests Chamila's attempt to negate not only her own usage of *lamai* but also the questions I ask her. Indeed when I ask '…do you use '*lamai* of our team'?' she accepts it but subsequently denies it as I further refer to this usage and indeed (doing) their collective identity as *lamai* in the industry. Interestingly this negation of (doing) the *lamai* identity at the moment it is traced here is done by, as we have also seen in our encounter with Thamara, taking refuge in the signifier/identity 'team member' as in official texts of

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(doing) HRM at ChillCo. So the text, I argue, reminds us how multiple texts and so multiple significations or languages of (doing) HRM – textual HRM – appear as a palatable means or ethical face that conceals, normalizes and legitimizes doing shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* in the industry. Indeed it reminds us that the language(s) of HRM if not what I call textual HRM is not sheer rhetoric but is part of the construction of social reality in everyday socio-organizational life (Kamoche 1995; Watson 1995a; 1995b). This role of textual HRM as well as 'resistance' to (doing) the *lamai* identity comes out even in my encounter with an 'inexperienced' male sewing machine operator, whom I call Chamidu.

Being a male 'seamstress'

Chamidu is a machine operator at ChillCo. He is rather shy about taking part in the interview. This shyness, as I see it, however, is not part of his inexperience. Rather it emerges as part of his job, as he is supposed to do a 'female job' (sewing machine operators if not seamstress as some official-written texts of doing HRM embody) in ChillCo. Indeed, as Chamidu narrates, he worked at another factory as a quality checker – a job which separates him, more or less, from the role of seamstress – and joined ChillCo four months ago as he was unable to find any other (male) job. Despite this shyness, his resistance to (doing) the collective identity of *lamai* – which he has been compelled to adopt due to his inability to find a suitable male job – emerges as our encounter unfolds:

> **Dhammika:** When you call, do you call in general, '*lamai* of our team'?
> **Chamidu:** Yes.
> **Dhammika:** Why is it used like that, as you think?
> **Chamidu:** Not in that way. When the team is formed, they work together. That's why we call as *ape kandayama* [our team]….

Dhammika: It is used as *lamaya* of our team, is it?

Chamidu: Yes, it is asked who are the '*lamai* of our team', then it is said these are [the team members if not *lamai*].

Dhammika: Is it [the term *lamai*] said outside [the company] also?

Chamidu: No.

This text exemplifies to the reader the manner in which Chamidu, like Chamila, accepts the common utterance of the term *lamai* to refer to (female) shopfloor workers. But, when this utterance is further questioned, the text exhibits the way in which Chamidu – being a shopfloor worker himself – constantly negates his own usage of the term as well as its usage in my questions. Indeed the text exemplifies Chamidu's attempt to deny (doing) the identity itself. This resistance if not attempt to *un*do the *lamai* identity by articulating a counter narrative, however, seemingly emerges only in the context in which workers are *conscious* that the term is being uttered and hence the *lamai* identity is being done and restored. Otherwise the term is uttered by shopfloor workers themselves to do their collective identity as *lamai* even in the con-text of the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) meeting – a palatable substitute for a trade union in ChillCo as well as in the wider industry.

The JCC

It is the first of June 2007. It is 11.30 – the start of the lunch break for the first batch of factory workers. I am in one of the boardrooms at ChillCo. I am waiting to observe, to record and to explore a JCC meeting – an encounter between shopfloor workers and the management at ChillCo. In the middle of the room there is a large oval shaped table surrounded by chairs. The MHR, Assistant Human Resource Manager and a male worker –

the secretary of the JCC – are sitting on chairs at one corner of the table. A few minutes afterwards, as the workers are late, the MHR makes a telephone call to the factory floor: he orders 'send *lamai* to here, right?' After another couple of minutes a few workers and two male executives come in. So the meeting formally commences at around 11.40, even though some of the workers/members continue to arrive after this formal start. Due to this gradual inflow of the members MHR asks that '[we] keep the door open to come *lamai* in'. This utterance of the term *lamai* before and at the start of the meeting reiterates to me how (doing) *lamai* is so common in everyday communication in ChillCo. It also, more interestingly, reminds me of the manner in which the workers become *lamai* even at the JCC meeting.

Finally the meeting consists of 17 workers (9 women and 8 men) and of four male executives including the MHR and his assistant manager. This relatively high representation of men – shopfloor jobs in ChillCo, women outnumber men 9:1 – reminds me of male workers' enthusiasm to represent their 'voice' (the voice of potential trouble makers as the OM narrates) even in this type of diluted industrial relations milieu. However, the majority of these male representatives are not 'seamstresses', even though they do shopfloor jobs in the factory.[108]

As its chair the meeting is dominated by the MHR. So it emerges as an assembly of telling and listening to problems and grievances by those present. During this 'telling and listening' process the executives as well as the workers utter the term *lamaya/lamai* and

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[108] Three are 731 seamstresses on the floor. Out of this only 20 'boys' do the 'seamstress' job.

hence tend to do and restore (female) shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* in ChillCo. In fact the MHR begins the meeting as follows:

> If you have problems, tell all [of them to me] *daruwo* [children, daughters/sons]

This utterance, despite its apparently affectionate and nurturing nature, embodies how shopfloor workers become *daruwo* – little ones – even in the formal industrial relations milieu at ChillCo. However, as the encounter unfolds, this relatively honoured term which denotes affection, mainly in the family milieu, is substituted by the term *lamai* when a male executive refers to the problem of (shopfloor) employee turnover:

> **Executive**: It is a problem of resigning *lamai* in the *bands*.
> **MHR**: Nothing can be done without *lamai*.

Ironically here as well the *lamai* identity emerges as a double-bind – as feeble *daruwo* (children, daughters/sons) and able *lamai* – since 'nothing can be done without *lamai*'.

When the subaltern speaks

However, this utterance is not limited to the executives at the meeting. Rather the workers themselves utter the term and hence tend to do their own collective identity as *lamai*. A female worker/representative raises an issue in her band as follows:

> **Worker**: *Lamai* in our *band* go home [leave the company]. [Because it is] difficult to work with Kanthi [a PA] *akka* [elder sister]. Even one [worker who] works about two years. We stop [her] by telling and changing her mind.
> **MHR**: We will look at it.

Paradoxically enough the term is also uttered or appears as part of either workers' resistance to the different managerial policies and practices of ChillCo or of their demands. For example, as another female worker narrates:

> There is no space in the bus comes from …[name of a near village]. Other two buses do not allow [us to get on]. Recently *lamayek* [a girl] nearly fell off [the bus]. [Workers in] other two buses shout that *lamai* can't come standing in [the bus].

This text embodies the ways in which the workers represent their collective demands while also doing their collective identity as *lamai* in ChillCo. However, the *lamai* identity portrayed in the text is neither feeble nor lowly. Rather it reminds the reader of the (potential) power of (female) shopfloor workers those who raise voice for their rights in the company. The text also ironically tends to peel off the deceiving layers of 'equal opportunities' – same buses, same canteen etc. – as in official texts of HRM.

Moreover, these demands are mostly put forward by male workers/representatives. So they in this industrial relations milieu appear as 'representatives' of those who 'cannot represent themselves' since "… the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (Spivak 1988a: 287). However, during this 'representation', like their female counterparts, male workers/representatives also utter the term *lamai*. Here a forgotten management promise is raised by a male worker:

> It has been told that a note [of overtime calculation] will be given to *lamai* to see. But [it was] not given.

So this meeting, which lasts only 20 minutes, not only embodies the fragile and symbolic nature of this industrial relation moment and indeed of doing HRM at ChillCo. It also exemplifies how these (doing) HRM driven initiatives like JCC and the texts woven within and during it tends to do and restore the workers' collective identity as *lamai*. Further it embodies the ways in which not only textual HRM and local texts (of undoing HRM) but also the executives and shopfloor workers gather together, intermingle and entwine to do,

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narrate and to restore female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai*. As I encounter at the meeting when the subject(ivity) of (female) shopfloor workers is in question the executives and the workers alike utter the term *lamai*. So (un)doing *lamai* identity in ChillCo emerges as an act which many different actors are involved in, but no single actor is individually accountable for.

The absent presence

Thus doing female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* in the con-text of ChillCo remains as an *un*noticed, generalized everyday utterance or act. Nevertheless it is always in a position to (dis)appear even in the minutes of the JCC, in Sinhala, which I went through during the secretary's and the male executives' précis of the meeting that took place after all the workers had left the room. As exhibited in the minutes of the JCC held on 19th March 2007, for example:

> It is reported that errors are made in calculating production incentives and thus it would be useful if *lamai* are given an opportunity to check the production incentives that they are entitled to, at least once a week.

This interesting official-*written* text of (doing) HRM in ChillCo tells the reader how the term/identity *lamai* is marked even in such written texts when the text is in Sinhala, despite its 'evaporation', as we have seen in the previous chapter (4), in official-written texts of (doing) HRM in the industry – the process that began in the 1990s. However, this appearance is rare in ChillCo, because most of these texts are in English – the written managerial language of ChillCo. So, as I encounter when I crosscheck it, this particular text when transcribed into English to forward to the monthly management meeting of ChillCo the term *lamai* is effaced. So common utterance of the term *lamai* to refer to and represent

the workers and indeed to do their collective identity at the JCC meeting effectively 'evaporates' in its official textual form – official-*written* texts of doing HRM – in English by furnishing needed ethical face to this (un)doing HRM driven initiative and indeed to doing *lamai* in ChillCo.

Coda

Thus the utterance or (dis)appearance of the term *lamai* and indeed doing, narrating and restoring the *lamai* identity in the con-text of ChillCo is ephemeral and remains unnoticed. On the one hand, as the reader experiences in different texts and contexts it is effaced without trace as it is primarily in the form of oral texts – of doing and undoing HRM – at ChillCo. When we come to official-written texts, chiefly of (doing) HRM of ChillCo, the reader rarely sees *lamai* or *mahana lamai* (sewing girls). Nevertheless the reader can easily encounter team members, team leaders, machine operators, seamstresses and the like in these official-written texts of (doing) HRM such as job descriptions, the operator upgrading manual, workers'/members' handbook and the like. For example, the job description in Sinhala for sewing machine operators marks this job/identity as '*kandayam samagika*' (team member) whereas the daily attendance sheet of factory workers (in English) – woven by the HR department – marks the same job as 'seamstress'. Further, as narrated in multiple written texts such as posters, messages given by the board of directors etc., which also go with doing HRM and so are part of textual HRM in ChillCo, the reader meets not *lamai* but an able, competent workforce, 'human resources', and even employee of the month who make ChillCo an 'unique corporate entity', as these texts narrate. However, this 'evaporation' of (doing) the *lamai* identity does not mean that the identity is totally effaced

from official-written texts of (doing) HRM at ChillCo. Instead this absence is the deferred presence of the identity even when the text is about doing HRM or part of textual HRM in ChillCo. For example, the 'induction guide' for newly recruited shopfloor workers, in Sinhala, marks the job/identity of the worker as '*kandayam samagika*' (team member) which is subsequently substituted by the term/identity '*lamaya*' as the text unfolds.

This cohabitation between (un)doing HRM and (un)doing *lamai*, I suggest, not only embodies the ways in which doing and undoing HRM and so textual HRM and local texts intermingle and entwine with each other to conceal, normalize and indeed to legitimize doing the workers' collective as *lamai*. It also shows the deceptive nature of HRM – within which the sing(s) supplements the thing(s) itself – in ChillCo and so in wider apparel industry. Therefore I argue what we confront as HRM in ChillCo is a series of events or texts which are woven, interwoven, (un)done and negotiated by different actors in many different socio-spatial arrangements as part and parcel of managing (female) shopfloor labour and so as part and parcel of (un)doing HRM itself within which textual HRM and local texts intermingle and entwine with each other.

On the other hand, this deceptive nature of doing *lamai* as part and parcel of (un)doing HRM or vice versa tends to blur the reader's realization of the 'truth' of (doing) the *lamai* identity at ChillCo – its agenda of gender. But this impossibility of realizing what the term *lamai* and indeed (doing) *lamai* identity really do for female shopfloor workers at ChillCo is also its possibility. So, as the term/identity *lamai* oscillates from one con-text to another, we come to realize how it tends to problematize its (apparently) innocent, generalized temperament and consequently how it tends to create a lowly, pejorative identity for female

shopfloor workers in ChillCo as *lamai* if not *mahana lamai* (sewing girls). Nevertheless this lowly, pejorative meaning/disposition is also itself in process. So the term/identity *lamai* in the con-text of ChillCo does not signify fixed or fixable meaning/identity. Instead it is always in process, always awaiting the next supplement – as it oscillates from one con-text to another in the process of (un)doing HRM in ChillCo. Indeed the *lamai* identity is fragmented, heterogeneous and even contradictory, even though it (dis)appears under the collective signature of *lamai*. Thus female shopfloor workers whom we encounter in ChillCo are feeble as well as able, ignorant as well as resourceful and so forth. But this dangerous supplement and so this doable-bind nature, the aporia of (doing) *lamai*, does not prevent us *un*doing the identity. Instead it is what – as we have seen it especially when the workers speak up – makes this undoing possible.

Paradoxically enough, despite this possibility of *un*doing, the collective identity of female shopfloor workers in the Katunayake FTZ, as the reader has encountered in the counsellor's room for example, emerges as a marginalized category within an already marginalized category; a subordinated group within an already subordinated group (see Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; Hewamanne 2003; 2008; Attanapola 2005). Thus after (un)finishing my fieldwork at ChillCo, I move to HotCo, located in the Katunayake FTZ, the backbone of the industry and so of narrating, doing and undoing the *lamai* identity.

HotCo

HotCo is a subsidiary of the same group of companies to which ChillCo belongs. It was established in 1978 in the Katunayake FTZ. It is one of the oldest apparel manufacturing companies still surviving in the zone. HotCo is headed by the same Director as ChillCo,

who was appointed by the group. But, like ChillCo, its day-to-day affairs are under the purview of a General Manager (GM). At the time I conduct my fieldwork HotCo is making profit, although it was experiencing losses during 2000-2003. Like ChillCo, HotCo's customer portfolio consists of well known international buyers such as Asda, Marks and Spencer, Tesco, Tommy Hilfiger and the like.

HotCo's factory is on the ground floor of its two-storey building. Like at ChillCo, it is designed as a line production system. The factory floor consists of 17 lines and the lines are divided into mini-teams. Each line has its own supervisor who is assisted and supervised by a Production Assistant. The factory floor and its people are also under the close surveillance of Production Executives and the Floor Manager. But the head of the floor is the Factory Manager.

HotCo employs more than 900 employees, including around 50 managers, 30 executives[109] and 60 supervisors. The rest of the workforce performs non-managerial jobs. However, as is common in the industry, 60 percent of the workforce at HotCo are shopfloor workers. Among them more than 80 percent are young women. The majority of these young women are unmarried and in the age range of 18-25. As at ChillCo, their everyday lives in the company – from recruitment to layoff – are governed, more or less, by policies, processes, procedures and indeed the multiple managerial apparatuses of (un)doing HRM at HotCo. Therefore, like at ChillCo, the people I met at HotCo had their own story to tell and retell – stories about (un)doing *lamai* at HotCo.

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[109] In HotCo as well as ChillCo the job title 'executive' (*viz.* HR executive, production executive etc.) represents actors who perform *junior* managerial roles in the companies.

Stories Narrated at HotCo

As my (dis)engagement with HotCo and its people continues – through multiple ways and means such as semi-structured and unstructured interviews, observation sessions etc. – I come to realize that, unlike at ChillCo, these stories are somewhat controversial as they emerge or are (re)narrated in the context of the Katunayake FTZ. So they always embody their (intertextual) link to the *kalape*[110] and so appear as an inescapable part of the nexus of the texts in the industry. Indeed, although they appear or are (re)narrated within the 'artificial' boundary of HotCo, they are highly interdiscursive and intertextual in nature. This plurivocal nature of stories narrated at HotCo emerges even in the GM's 'professional' version of HotCo and its everyday affairs.

Starting at the top

It is a sunny day in July 2007, at around 9.15 a.m. I am in the reception hall in HotCo, at its entrance. In front of me, at the receptionist's counter, a busy young woman is answering telephone calls. Sometimes she makes announcements using a microphone on her front desk. She is the receptionist of HotCo to whom I speak about the reason for my visit. A few minutes later the GM's secretary comes to apologise to me that he is going to be late. I have an appointment with him at 9.30 a.m. Since I have nothing to do, I am looking around the surroundings. Behind the receptionist I can see the same poster which I saw in ChillCo, but with different young women. It also says 'Our difference is our human resource…'. At the end of the narrow corridor which leads to the offices and factory floor of HotCo I can see

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[110] The term *kalape* means 'zone' and indeed the FTZ. But as I have already mentioned (see footnote 5) I use this term to highlight the blurring between the 'inside' and 'outside' of the Katunayake FTZ.

the factory itself through its front glass wall. I hear different announcements through loudspeakers that interrupt the background music – Sinhala songs – played in the factory.

I am attempting to take down some notes in my field notebook. But I am bothered by an apparently abstract question – what does this 'glass wall' really do for the factory women in HotCo? I am taken back to the everyday reality of HotCo by a familiar voice – '*Sir*, have you been here long-time? Kasun *sir* told me yesterday, a lecturer named Dhammika from the [Sri] Jayewardenepura University [where I teach] come today to do a research here. I thought, you are'. He is Tharanga, one of my former students doing an HRM degree programme, who now works as an HR Executive at HotCo. This nice but busy young executive leaves after a friendly chat that paves the way to have another brief chat with his fellow HR Executive in HotCo, Chamara, who was also my student.

Within half an hour a fairly large friendly man who is in his mid-thirties arrives in a chauffeured luxury car. He is Kasun, the GM of HotCo. At first glance we both identify who we are. Kasun greets me and apologises for his lateness. As he has some work to do I have to wait another couple of minutes in the boardroom in HotCo, where our encounter is carried out. Kasun, an engineering graduate, joined ChillCo in 1997 as a management trainee. Soon after ChillCo moved to its current location, he was promoted to the position of Production Manager. During the time HotCo was making losses Kasun was requested to take over the GM's responsibility at HotCo. He was promoted in 2003 and converted the company to making profit within a few months.

As is customary in managerial communication in Sri Lanka, particular with top-level managers, I conduct the interview in English.[111] It takes over an hour. Like my encounter with the GM at ChillCo, my encounter with Kasun is also to further strengthen my access to the company – the research site – and to know about its evolution, present situation and the like. However, as the encounter unfolds, I experience that even though Kasun has not pre-prepared for the interview like Gamini, his approach is more professional.

Beyond professionalism

Despite this professionalism, while our encounter unfolds, the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers in HotCo emerges, just as it (dis)appears in ChillCo. For example, when I ask about workers' trade unions in HotCo:

> **Dhammika:** Are there any trade unions [at HotCo]?
>
> **GM:** No, we have JCC, but [he is naming the companies in the zone which have trade unions]... Luckily we don't have it, but we have a good JCC… Sometimes if there is some special occasion, recently there is, the Government told us to increase the wages [of the factory workers].We sent this message to girls through JCC… You know, normally an average girl earns around Rs. 12000[112] [per month] with incentives, O.T…

Unlike in Sinhala, uttering or doing female shopfloor workers' collective identity as embodied and embedded in English texts, oral or written, is straightforward. These texts use the term girl/s instead of the supposedly 'gender neutral' term *lamaya/lamai* – which can connote both *ganu lamai* (girls) and *pirimi lamai* (boys). However, as the reader has already recognized, for example in Sinhala cinematic texts like *Sulang Kirilli* and in its

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[111] Except this interview all the interviews I conducted with the actors of HotCo took place in Sinhala.
[112] Roughly £70.

English prelude, the terms/identities 'girl/s' and '*lamaya/lamai*' substitutes for each other as they oscillate from one con-text to another. So what the English term 'girl' signifies in the con-text of Sri Lanka's apparel industry is not 'girl' as such, its denotation in English; 'a young woman' or 'a female child' or perhaps 'a person's girlfriend', as dictionary meanings suggest to us (*Pocket Oxford English Dictionary* 2005: 382), but *lamai*. Nevertheless the colloquial character of the term and the lowly meaning/disposition which it portrays in the con-text of the apparel industry are harder to grasp because they (dis)appears through the deceiving textual form of (doing) HRM in HotCo – here it is through the JCC.

From girls to lamai

But this dangerous supplement – from girl to *lamai* and vice versa – is the case even in Kasun's 'professional' version when he explains to me about the workers' training programme, titled and conducted in Sinhala – *Sinahawen Wedat Awith Thurpthimathwa Gedara Yanna* (Come to Work With a Smile, Go Home With Pleasure). Here Kasun moves into Sinhala and subsequently back to English again. I italicize the part of the encounter which is in Sinhala.

> **Dhammika:** *Do you think that they come [to work] without satisfaction?*
> **GM:** *No, come with satisfaction, there may be some people who do not come with satisfaction. But I think lamaya who comes to work to here,* a worker comes to work here, waiting [eagerly to come] to work…

Interestingly when Kasun speaks in Sinhala the female shopfloor workers at HotCo whom the reader confronts as girl/s in English suddenly become *lamaya/lamai* and subsequently worker/s in English. Thus the text suggests that even when the tem/identity girl appears it

signifies not the girl as such but its deferred presence, *lamai*. However, not only this substitution but also the colloquialism of the utterance – doing *lamai* identity – here as well remains largely unnoticed, as it always (dis)appears as part and parcel of doing HRM in HotCo. Here the context is the employee training programme. Thus (doing) HRM in this con-text, I argue, appears as a palatable means or ethical face that tends to normalize and legitimize the 'vulgar' nature of (doing) the *lamai* identity in this work milieu, because the term/identity is effaced by the term/identity worker at the very moment it is traced in the text. However, this 'vulgar' nature as well as its 'effacement' is likewise both ephemeral and context-bound.

The difference

As our encounter continues, Kasun, as I have foreseen, begins to differentiate female shopfloor workers in HotCo from their counterparts in ChillCo – his previous workplace:

> ChillCo [shopfloor] girls are much more flexible. They listen to you, they oblige.., I mean they are very obliging …Here it is totally different.

As this text narrates those who appear under the collective signature of *lamai* are fragmented and heterogeneous. So girls in HotCo – in the zone – are substantially different to their counterparts in ChillCo – outside the zone – as they are more 'girlish' or 'feminine': flexible, listening and obliging which echoes so-called feminine characteristics as some researchers suggest (see Grant 1988; Rosener 1990; Carless 1998). This rupture of the collective signature of *lamai* and indeed this 'pejorative' identity of female shopfloor workers in the zone is further exposed as the encounter unfolds. As Kasun narrates:

> If you go to a village, and if [you] say, you are working at Katunayake [FTZ] that is a negative mark. For whatever the reason, you know, we [different actors in the zone] have

done in the past. And so what the girl does is she hides this. She doesn't want to say 'I was working in [Katunayake] Free Trade Zone'. They [she] might say you are working in HotCo [due to the good image of the company as narrated by the GM]. But not [in the] Free Trade Zone. Free Trade Zone is sort of corrupted area. People know it… One thing is, once they [female shopfloor workers] come to Colombo [from remote villages], one of the priorities that they have is earn money and find a partner… Lot of these people [female shopfloor workers] have fallen [in]to wrong hands.

Thus the workers whom we confront in the Katunayake FTZ or in the context of the *kalape* are not those who we encounter outside it. Similarly what the term *lamai* connotes in the *kalape* is not its relatively honoured meaning/identity in wider Sri Lankan society. Rather it is lowly and pejorative. This lowly and pejorative identity which the girls want to hide or escape from is, as this text tells us, an outcome of the interplay between their *ganu lamai* identity and their occupation/class as female shopfloor workers in the industry in the 'notorious' Katunayake FTZ. It emerges not because of being *ganu lamai* but because of being factory women in the notorious zone. Thus these girls like the factory women, who we have already met mostly in the cinematic texts, have fallen into the 'wrong hands' and so are 'corrupted' and 'naughty' girls. So this text also embodies how it exceeds its organizational boundary within which it is woven and hence exhibits its intertextual nature – how it includes and represents other voices/discourses on and about factory women in the industry, particularly in the *kalape*.

This lowly collective identity is not what female shopfloor workers wish to be part of. Instead it is what their very (non)existence as factory women in the wider society in general and the *kalape* in particular has forced upon them. As Kasun narrates:

GM: A girl who comes to work here normally leaves at the fifth year. OK, normally.

Dhammika: What are the reasons?

GM: Normally they come at around when they are eighteen, seventeen and half [years of age].

Dhammika: Just, they leave?

GM: And in the zone people want to earn as much as possible as soon as possible.

Dhammika: For what?

GM: Basically, they come to earn money. Lot of people are boarding here. So the boarding environment, the girl doesn't like [it]. So the girl wants to stay here, as long as [possible in] the factory.

Dhammika: So, you don't have problem about O.T. and the things like [that]?

GM: I have the problem, because compliance [of some foreign buyers – see footnote 31]. Otherwise girls are willing to work.

Dhammika: Because they want to avoid the boarding environment?

GM: They want to avoid the environment outside.

This text – which embodies 'girls'' expectations, their family roots in remote villages, their lives in boarding houses and even how foreign buyers shape and align (un)doing HRM in the industry – narrates the very (non)existence of the workers in the *kalape* within which their lowly identity is done, narrated, restored and even undone (Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; Hewamanne 2003; 2008). As a result of this very (non)existence they are 'willing' do overtime if not over-work as they want to avoid the 'environment outside' – inside the *kalape*. As a result they want to earn as much as possible as soon as possible, as they want to detach themselves from their very (non)existence as *lamai* in the *kalape*. As a result a girl who comes to work in the *kalape* normally leaves after five years. Thus (doing) workers' collective identity as *lamai* in the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry, particularly in the *kalape*, is not as innocent as the term/identity *lamai* in wider Sri Lankan society (dis)appears. In contrast it is a vicious cycle in which the workers are trapped and so their very non-existence as factory women is defined, shaped and negotiated. Thus it

also emerges and (dis)appears as an everyday, generalized occurrence in the HotCo as my (dis)engagement with its actors continues, particularly when men in managerial positions speak.

Displeasure of (un)doing HRM – pleasure of doing *lamai*

A few days after my encounter with the GM, I am able to meet the Human Resource Manager (MHR) in HotCo whom I call Chamin. Chamin is in his late thirties. He is a graduate in social sciences and a diploma holder in HRM. Chamin joined HotCo as the MHR in 2005 with wide experience in the industry. Like my encounter with the GM, this interview is carried out in the boardroom and lasts around one hour during I gather and generate data about the nature of (un)doing HRM and so doing *lamai* in HotCo. However, it is conducted in Sinhala.

Unlike the GM, the MHR's approach to the encounter is somewhat 'theoretical' as well as 'poetic' – he uses many metaphors, ironies etc. to weave his story. As I experience it, this is partly due to his displeasure about the ways in which people management in the apparel industry, more specifically at HotCo, is being carried out. Despite this, (doing) the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers in HotCo still (dis)appears and is narrated. Paradoxically enough, as at ChillCo, this utterance of the term *lamai* and so doing the *lamai* identity (dis)appears primarily through the deceiving textual form of (doing) HRM.

The everyday chores of doing HRM

Thus even when HotCo engages in its most routine HR practices – i.e., recruitment and selection:

> **Dhammika:** What is the reason for recruitment and retention become most common HR
> practice in HotCo? Is it due to what you call *staff*[113], if not?
>
> **MHR:** Mainly [due to] *lamai..,* mainly *lamai..,* within a month, fifty to sixty *machine*
> *operators* resign from our factory…

As Chamin narrates those whom HotCo expects to 'recruit and retain' are not machine operators and the like, as recorded in official-written texts of (doing) HRM, but *lamai*. However, the utterance of this term, its colloquial character, 'disappears' here as well because, on the one hand, it (dis)appears through the deceiving textual form of doing HRM at HotCo – here the case is recruitment and selection. On the other hand, the term/identity *lamai* is effaced at the moment it is traced as it is immediately substituted by the term/identity 'machine operators' in textual HRM. So (doing) HRM in HotCo, as at ChillCo, I argue, normalizes if not legitimizes (doing) the *lamai* identity.

Lamai, staff and absenteeism

Thus, although doing HRM largely appears as a symbolic process in HotCo, it is not rhetoric as such. Rather by intermingling with undoing HRM it constructs its own reality in the context of HotCo and indeed in the wider industry. Chamin goes on to explain to me the so-called absenteeism check in HotCo:

> **MHR:** Most of the time we have '*one to one*', '*eye to eye*' relationship with *lamai*.
> Like checking absenteeism, every day we go [to the factory floor] and check who
> has come, who has not come, what are the problems?… A few of us in the human
> resource division go [to the floor]. In the guise of checking absenteeism what we
> actually do is we practically go there [to the floor] and meet each other.

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[113] HotCo (unofficially) divides its workforce into three categories *viz.* management, staff (non-managerial, non-factory workers, e.g. clerical staff) and factory workers.

Dhammika: Do you do this for the s*taff*?

MHR: We do not do for the *staff* 100%. No we don't do this 100% for the *staff*. We don't do it for the *staff* as much as for *lamai*. [We] can't do it 100% for everyone. But at some point everyone gets covered by this, as [we] continue it for overtime… Truly.., [when we go to] see *lamayekwa* [a girl] is at home [boarding house] due to sickness, at the boarding [house] without [her] father and mother, [when we go to] see *lamayawa* [a girl] in this wooden room, the joy that *lamaya* feels when we go there,[114] and the words that that *lamaya* utters within the institute [factory] when [she] returns next day, that *lamyage* [girl's] own words, we know the *reception* we have in this *production line* [due to this].

In this 'poetic' text Chamin narrates the 'absenteeism check' of (female) factory workers – an everyday practice of (doing) HRM at HotCo. However, the 'absenteeism check' is not just a practice of checking absentees on the floor. Rather it is another moment in which doing and undoing HRM at HotCo entwine. Indeed the 'absenteeism check' as in official-written texts of doing HRM at ChillCo is, I argue, the 'official' or 'ethical' face given to this practice (of undoing HRM) which is aimed at retaining shopfloor workers by 'helping' them when they are in a difficult situation. However, as the deep interior of the text recounts to us and, I have personally experienced in my tour of the absentees' boarding houses – which I share with the reader in a later part of this chapter – this 'helping' is also 'fake'. It is not an ethical means of helping by recognizing these workers' very (non)existence in the *kalape*, but a means of capitalizing on the difficult situations which they are in. This unexpected visit by managers thus creates a social obligation among the absentees to report to the work and retain the company, because in Sri Lankan society

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[114] On one occasion a 'girl' we went to see during my fieldwork at HotCo even treated us (the Assistant HR Manager, a female employee from the training division, the driver of the vehicle and myself) by serving soft drinks.

practices such as going to see a person when s/he is sick, attending a funeral etc. create tight social bond and obligations.

Multiple lamai, multiple excuses

As Chamin's version of HotCo and its everyday affairs, particularly managing (female shopfloor) labour – the ways in which (un)doing HRM intermingles and entwines with (doing) the *lamai* identity in HotCo – continues, I ask Chamin why he as well as other actors in HotCo utter the term *lamai* to refer to and represent shopfloor workers:

> **Dhammika:** Chamin, do you commonly use this term *lamai* in talking?
>
> **MHR:** Do you mean using the term *lamai*? In a closed environment like this [personal interview in the boardroom], we call them as *lamai*. Actually this term *lamai* have derived from the idea of 'little one'. It is not in the same way as *Juki kello* [Juki girls], *mahana kello* [sewing girls]. Even though we commonly call them *lamai* mostly [we call them] as *nangi* [younger sister] or if we know [their] names we call them by names. If not, mostly, we call them as *nangi* [younger sister].
>
> **Dhammika:** Do you use [the term] *lamai* commonly to call the *staff*?
>
> **MHR:** Hmm, when we address the staff, the term *lamai* is not used.
>
> **Dhammika:** Do they [female shopfloor workers] like or dislike being addressed them as *lamai*?
>
> **HRM:** The term *lamai* was originally created with the idea [that they are] a group that is in somewhat lower level than the *management* and [so] should be looked after by the *management*, as I think as *lamai*… Even at home, we call as *lamai* to [those] who are looked after by us.

This text not only shows the interdiscursive nature of the term/identity *lamai* where multiple versions of *lamai* (*viz. Juki kello* - Juki girls, *mahana kello* - sewing girls and *nangi* - younger sister) come into play. It also recounts to the reader the way in which the term/identity is substituted by (and substitutes for) these other versions or residual/relational identities as the term/identity *lamai* oscillates from one con-text to

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another. Indeed the term/identity which (dis)appears in the 'closed environment' – i.e., personal interview took place in a boardroom – as Chamin puts it, is substituted by the terms *nangi* (younger sister) and proper names of the workers on the factory floor. The text, its deep interior, further insists to the reader that this utterance if not identity is not 'gender neutral' as it goes with *nangi* (younger sister) and *kello* (girls) but not with *malli* (younger brother) or *kollo* (boys). Nevertheless it does not suggest that the identity is merely due to the gender of these workers. Rather the text embodies, and as the reader has already come to realize, it emerges from the interplay between the workers' gender – *ganu lamai* – identity in wider Sri Lankan society and their class/occupational identity as shopfloor workers in the apparel industry, as some researchers suggest (Butler 1990; Collinson 1992; Hall et al. 2007). It is thus that female shopfloor workers' collective identity is done, narrated and restored in relation to the adult/mature role played by the management who are on a 'higher' level than the workers in HotCo's socio-managerial strata. The text, however, does not deal directly with the workers' pleasure and displeasure about the identity. Indeed Chamin appears to try to defuse the question by pointing to the 'nurturing' that the use of *lamai* implies in HotCo. So this term/identity, as the text insists, has shifted – away from pejorative terms/identities like *Juki kello* (*Juki* girls) – and thus appears as an 'innocent', generalized utterance in the present con-text of Sri Lanka's apparel industry.

The absence as deferred presence

However, this notion – the shift and so 'evaporation' of *Juki kello* (*Juki* girls) – is itself negated as the encounter continues. For example, this happens when Chamin compares and contrasts '*lamai*' at HotCo with their counterparts at ChillCo, as Kasun has already done:

> *Lamai* here [in the zone] are highly corrupted. Now if we take the *lamai* at ChillCo, there are *lamai* like flowers. Not here.., here.., looking from that angle [they are] very corrupted. They are *very stiff girls* [*lamai*]. Rather than calling [them] corrupted, they are rigid *lamai*… When newcomers come we can see the difference well. *Lamayek* [a girl] who has come from village wearing a printed frock which cover [her] legs,[115] the way that that *lamaya* talks with us, the relationship that is built between us and that *lamaya* is in many ways different from the responses of a person [girl] who has walked through other factories, who has walked through life [i.e., a person with a lot of experience].

This interesting and rather poetic text categorizes *lamai*. It portrays corrupted *lamai*, rigid *lamai*, and *lamai* with experience as well as *lamai* like flowers. So the text embodies its nostalgia for helpless, innocent girls who we have met in the industry in its nascent liberalized context, particularly in the texts woven by the politicians (see chapter 4). But the female shopfloor workers whom the reader encounters at present in the Katunayake FTZ are corrupted, rigid workers. They are certainly different from their (imaginary) counterparts at ChillCo and indeed outside the zone. This difference or dishonoured identity, as the text narrates, is an outcome of the context – the *kalape* – itself within which 'innocent' village girls become 'naughty' girls (see *Sunday Island* 1991; also Hewamanne 2003; 2008). Thus the text narrates the ways in which this rather honoured (term) identity of *lamai* in the wider social context becomes tainted when it appears in the con-text of Sri Lanka's apparel industry, particularly in the Katunayake FTZ. Indeed the text reminds us that the absence or 'evaporation' of the pejorative identity of *lamai* – *Juki kello* (*Juki* girls) along with *mahana lamai* (sewing girls) – in official-written texts of (doing) HRM in HotCo and the wider industry is, *via* Derrida (1982), only a spatiotemporal delay, its deferred presence.

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[115] In wider social context in Sri Lanka, this dress is regarded as 'decent', although it is not fashionable.

Lord of the ring

After my encounter with Chamin I have the opportunity to meet the Factory Manager (FM) of HotCo in his office. This is a square room, facing the factory floor. A well-built man in his early forties is giving instructions if not reprimanding a few male workers – who appear to be PAs or in similar job positions – about a fault in a garment. He asks me to sit on a front seat at his table for a few minutes. His tone and body language show me that he is quite unhappy about this strange visitor to his domain – the factory floor. Indeed after the workers leave I have to brief him about the purpose of my visit and the research to encourage him to narrate his version of HotCo.

The FM, whom I call Gihan, joined the industry as a PA in 1993. After working in another factory in the Katunayake FTZ as a Production Manager, he joined HotCo in 2006 as the FM. However, as he narrates, he also worked in HotCo during 1994-1995 as a PA.

The shopfloor floor and the lamai

Although Gihan begins the encounter in a somewhat unfriendly and unenthusiastic manner, his version of HotCo and its 'factory women' emerges as the encounter unfolds. This is noticeable when he narrates technical aspects of the floor:

> **Dhammika:** On what basis workers are allocated [to the production line], normally?
> **FM:** They have separate *lines*. There are operators who are allocated for those *lines*. Now, that *lamaya* is permanently in that *line…*
> **Dhammika:** Is there a *leader* for a *line*?
> **FM:** There is a *supervisor*, there is also a *leader*. *Leader* means basically [finding out] why *lamai* are absent, what has happened to [their] leave? We keep *leader* as a representative of *lamai*.

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As the reader has already recognized in many other encounters, here as well the sewing machine operator is substituted by *lamai* as the encounter unfolds. The nature of the operators as 'little ones', as the FM narrates, creates a vacuum for another position called 'leader' of the lines. This leader, however, is not the person who leads the team, as she is also a seamstress. Instead she is a proxy for *lamai* as they are not in a position to represent themselves by themselves.

Girls who are afraid to be a leader

This 'disability' of the workers further emerges when I ask Gihan about the mini-teams. As he narrates:

> **FM:** Most of time I see, that *lamai* don't like to take on leadership. Perhaps [they are] afraid, or there are that types of things. Sometimes we hire *lamayekwa* [a girl] to a *line* and make her a leader. They are afraid to talk about even the problems in the *line*.
>
> **Dhammika:** That means they don't come forward?
>
> **FM:** [They are] afraid to come forward.
>
> **Dhammika:** What [do you] think about that? Their background or something else?
>
> **FM:** I think it's their background.
>
> **Dhammika:** Now a *supervisor* is selected from that group?
>
> **FM:** It's very rarely that a *supervisor nagitinne* ['stands up'].

Despite the able competent worker whom the reader meets in official-written texts of (doing) HRM at HotCo, the female shopfloor worker whom s/he confronts on the factory floor, as this text narrates, is a different kind of girl. She does not like to take leadership responsibility as she is 'afraid to come forward'. This anxiety is, however, not accidental. Rather it is, as the text narrates, part of these girls' background. So the text not only implies to the reader its creation of a textual space to do the workers' collective identity as *lamai* by

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intermingling with the other texts in the nexus – here the case is the background; the innocent, helpless girls (*asarana ganu lamai*) without a job due to a lack of professional training whom the reader has already encountered in many social texts. It also ruptures the nature of 'corrupted', 'rigid' girls (identity) in the GM's and particularly the MHR's stories. So, as at ChillCo, workers' collective identity at HotCo is a double-bind; able and feeble, evil and innocent and so on.

Motivation and marriage

Despite this aporia of (doing) the *lamai* identity, narrating and doing the feeble and helpless identity of female shopfloor workers at HotCo further emerges as this encounter unfolds. As Gihan puts it, when I ask him about the relatively high level labour turnover among shopfloor workers at HotCo:

> **FM:** What I have seen in the *garment trade* is, what *lamai* are targeting, basically, is marriage.
>
> **Dhammika:** That means like collecting [their] dowry?
>
> **FM:** Not exactly, I think that is the situation in Sri Lanka. Women assume that once they get married their problems are over. [They] rarely think about the problems which come after marriage… Generally when we talk what I see is *ganu aya* [women] most time think about marriage. Why I say this is when talking often I have heard *lamai* saying '[I] am getting married next year and won't come after that'. Marriage is what is in [their] heads. They live until that [marriage]. After that they hang on that man's neck. And try to live off that man. That is how I see this [he is laughing].

This text narrates the ways in which socio-organizational prejudices about female shopfloor workers in the industry in particular and about women in wider Sri Lankan society in general (see Jayawardena 1994; 2000; Hewamanne 2003; 2008; Lynch 2007) intermingle

and entwine with each other to construct female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* in HotCo. Indeed these workers are seen as less motivated towards work, irrational, dependent and so as the Other of the man who 'he is complete' whereas 'she is lack' (Atkins 2005d: 238). This peculiar identity, I argue, not only justifies these workers' very (non)existence in the identity as *lamai*. It also tends to rupture their glorified identity as in official-written texts of (doing) HRM in HotCo that (dis)appears under the banners of *kandyam samagika* (team member), 'human resources' and the like. Thus the text reminds the reader of the unfinished, fragmented and processual nature of the *lamai* identity, which is always subject to being substituted by other relational terms/identities as it oscillates from one con-text to another.

Indeed as my (dis)engagement with HotCo and its people continues, I come to realize that, unlike in ChillCo, male managers' versions of (doing) the *lamai* identity in HotCo is often shaped by and mirrors (discourses on) 'factory women' in the *kalape* (see Hewamanne 2003; 2008; Attanapola 2005), who we have already confronted in different social texts, mainly in cinematic texts (see chapter 4). This is vivid even in my semi-structured interview with Tharanga, the HR Executive, where he explains many 'technicalities' of (un)doing HRM at HotCo as well as of the factory floor. Nevertheless here he attempts to insist to me how smooth the relationships is between the managers and the shopfloor workers in HotCo, although, as many others in the company, he utters the term *lamai* to refer to and portray (female) shopfloor workers. As he puts it, for example:

> **Tharanga**: Mr. Gihan [FM], Mr. Kasun [GM], Mr. Chamin [MHR], all of them.., all of us, in many occasions, have a close relationship with *lamai,* than in other factories. Now, even though Mr. Gihan often shouts, [he] never shouts at *lamai*. If he shouts, he shouts at *supervisor*, or else at *work-study officer…*

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Thus, as I come to realize the impossibility of interviewing workers or even supervisors on the company premises, I interview two women managers; first Kumari, the Assistant Human Resource Manager (AMHR), and then Lalani, the Floor Manager.

Beyond boys' stories

It is around 11.30 am. I start my encounter with Kumari in the same boardroom where I interviewed the GM and the MHR. Kumari is in her early thirties. She is married and looks mature. She wares a *sariya*. Kumari started her career as an HR clerk in the industry in 1992. Then she became an HR Assistant and subsequently was promoted to an HR Executive position in 2004. In 2005 Kumari joined HotCo as an HR Executive. She was appointed to her present position in 2006. However, at present Kumari also performs the role of the counsellor in HotCo as the counsellor resigned recently. Nevertheless she is not a professionally qualified counsellor.

Kumari shows great enthusiasm throughout the encounter which lasts around 40 minutes. When I ask some 'tricky' questions, for example why 'boys' have a better chance to be promoted than 'girls' in the factory, this friendly manager takes time to respond and attempts to defend her stance and indeed the policies and practices of (doing) HRM in HotCo. Despite this attentive approach to the encounter, as is ordinary in HotCo, Kumari also utters the term *lamai* to refer to and portray (female) shopfloor workers in the company throughout the encounter.

The role of AMHR

Indeed this utterance emerges even at the very beginning of the encounter when I ask Kumari about her role as AMHR:

> **Dhammika:** What's your *role* here?
>
> **AMHR:** *Basically* my [role is] to talk to *lamai*.
>
> **Dhammika:** Does that mean when you *recruit* [workers]?
>
> **AMHR:** Not when recruiting. But [with] those who had been recruited. Before we put them to the floor, in addition to the induction we *HR* [people] talk with them…
>
> **Dhammika:** Is it only about the *factory floor* that you talk [at the induction]?
>
> **AMHR:** No, no, overall. We educate *lamai* on all the *procedures* here generally.

As this text embodies, the AMHR role is inevitably focused on the (female) shopfloor workers in HotCo. Nevertheless, here as well the workers become *lamai*, despite the gender of the narrator. However, doing the workers' collective identity as *lamai* remains largely unnoticed as it (dis)appears through and as part and parcel of (doing) HRM in HotCo – recruitment, induction and the like. As such, as in many other encounters, here (doing) HRM normalizes the colloquial character of the term/identity *lamai*.

Other than this normalization of (doing) the *lamai* identity one of the noticeable features of Kumari's version of HotCo and its (un)doing HRM is that it reveals how HotCo breaches its own policy if not promise of managing employment as in official-written texts of (doing) HRM, since HotCo prefers to recruit *ganu lamai* (girls) than *pirimi lamai* (boys) for shopfloor jobs.

Boys: the trouble makers

This (undisclosed) gendered policy emerges when I ask Kumari whether there is high labour turnover even among male shopfloor workers as she explains to me that many female shopfloor workers leave HotCo because they find it difficult to adapt to the industry and particularly to the zone:

> **Dhammika:** Now is there a trend [leaving the job] like that among *pirimi lamai* [boys]?
> **AMHR:** Oh, we rarely recruit *boys* here.
> **Dhammika:** What is the reason for that?
> **AMHR:** Because *pirimi lamai* [boys] most times, *boys* are a little that means they are doing other things in addition to their jobs. That means things like strikes… Therefore we recruit *ganu lamai* [girls] as much as possible.

As at ChillCo, as the reader has already experienced, HotCo views *pirimi lamai* (boys) as potential trouble makers as they are keen to do 'other things' than the job. The text, its deep interior, in fact implies to the reader how actors in HotCo assign a feeble, innocent temperament to female shopfloor workers on the factory floor, as they are viewed as not causing trouble. This (gendered) recruitment policy is, however, non-existent in official-written texts of HRM in HotCo since they pledge even to recruit HIV positive job applicants. Instead this text tells us how so-called impartial HRM instruments in recruitment and selection are actually contaminated by gender prejudices, as many researchers claim (Collinson et al. 1990; Morgan and Knights 199; Woodall 1996; Dickens 1998). But this gendered policy if not gender prejudice about women's (and men's) wage labour, as Kumari further narrates, always tends to create positive initiatives for male labour on the factory floor.

Ganu lamai and promotion

Thus by reflecting upon my experiences as an observer on the factory floor – where I saw many men were in supervisory and similar grades, even though women are the majority on the floor – I ask Kumari how the AMHR explains this 'broken promise' of equal opportunity in HotCo as in its official-written texts of (doing) HRM:

> **Dhammika:** If I suggest there is better chance for *boys* to be promoted [in the factory]?
>
> **AMHR:** Hmm.., now in many times in production, tendency of women.., in many times tendency of women becoming supervisors are low.
>
> **Dhammika:** But women are the majority on the production [floor].
>
> **AMHR:** No, that's *machine operators*…
>
> **Dhammika:** Why have they [female workers] not been promoted as you think?
>
> **AMHR:** They are, now it is like this, as I said before, why they aren't promoted is to be promoted only knowledge about sewing is not enough. Now she should have ability to give the required target by controlling the *line*.
>
> **Dhammika:** Do you think that it is difficult for women to do it?
>
> **AMHR:** There are *ganu lamai* [girls] who do it. It is not impossible. But everyone can't do it…
>
> **Dhammika:** Why is [it] that more *pirimi lamai* [boys] are promoted?
>
> **AMHR:** That's what I am saying, now that, hmm.., now we think if we hire a supervisor. Who reaches to supervisory level in this trade are *pirimi pakshya* [men folks].
>
> **Dhammika:** How do you view it? Why is that?
>
> **AMRM:** That's.., hmm.., now sometimes women are more sensitive. Now in this work environment, [supervisor] has to work under high pressure. To certain extent *kantha pakshya* [women folks] might be less able to cope with that pressure.

As this text embodies, 'men folks' have a better opportunity to be promoted, even though they are viewed as potential trouble makers. This trouble making 'character' of men, *via* Derrida (1988b), is in fact a double-bind. On the one hand, it creates less opportunity for men to be recruited for shopfloor jobs. On the other hand, it either leads them to be recruited for supervisory jobs or, when recruited, they have better opportunity to be

promoted, as they are viewed as 'able workers' and supervisors who can work under pressure. Paradoxically the non trouble makers – *ganu lamai* (girls) – are viewed as 'women folks' who find it difficult to cope with the demands of the factory floor. So, by upsetting their naughty, corrupted identity, female shopfloor workers emerge as embodying in a different type of 'femininity' – indeed passive, docile, dependent and so on – as some researchers articulate (see Freud 1986; Mills 1997; also Atkins 2005c).

This undisclosed view of men as 'able' and women as 'feeble' workers thus reaffirms the FM's version of female shopfloor workers on the floor. Paradoxically enough it is also endorsed by the Floor Manager – with whom we interact after Kumari's interview – more or less, who has climbed her career ladder from being a seamstress to her current position. In fact this gender prejudice if not 'agenda of gender' of (un)doing HRM in HotCo, I argue, is not free from the female workers' collective identity as *lamai*. Rather it emerges and is deployed as part and parcel of the *lamai* identity itself. However, like many actors in HotCo and ChillCo, Kumari's version of 'why *lamai*' is blurred.

Why lamai?

When I notice that Kumari like other actors in HotCo freely utters the term *lamai* to refer to and portray (female) shopfloor workers in HotCo, I ask her about this utterance:

> **Dhammika:** Why are they called *lamai* in the industry?
>
> **AMHR:** I think it is because easy to use. As I think that it is because there are many [shopfloor workers]. Sometimes [it is] I think because it is easy to use, when we try to call [them as] *sewakayo* [workers - it is quite odd].
>
> **Dhammika**: If I suggest that it is in order to control them, [that] they are called *lamai*?
>
> **AMHR:** Oh, according to my view I don't think it is that. I think because it is easy to use.

This text reiterates to the reader how different actors in HotCo are conditioned to the utterance of the term *lamai* and so to (do) the *lamai* identity. As a result there are multiple interpretations if not excuses for the utterance of and hence doing workers' collective identity as *lamai*. However, this text embodies that, unlike male managers in HotCo, female narrators are more reluctant to articulate the *lamai* identity as a lowly, pejorative one. As we will see later, this was also the case in my encounter with the Floor Manager.

Counselling and lamai

Despite this reluctance, the utterance is vivid even when we come to Kumari's highly regarded (additional) role as the counsellor in HotCo. As Kumari narrates when I ask about her experiences as the counsellor at HotCo:

> **AMHR:** I will tell a problem that came up today. Now that *lamaya* asked to go on half day today. She had been married before. Even her *line* [members] doesn't know about that. She has a six year old *babek* [baby]. *Baba* [the baby] is growing up with her mother. Now she is living with another *husband* without marrying him.[116] When the *lamaya* was going home after work yesterday [her] *husband* had left taking the things that they had bought together. That *lamaya* doesn't know anything about it.
>
> **Dhammika:** Now, what type of institutional support is provided?
>
> **AMHR:** Now, the *lamaya* came today morning and told me that she did not have a mentality to work today. In that case I appreciated [this conduct of] the *lamaya*. Whatever the problem you had, it is important your attendance to the institute [HotCo] today, because *lamaya* has [already taken] a lot of leave. *Lamaya* is on *no pay* [she is only entitled to unpaid leave]. *Lamayek* [a girl] who doesn't have leave.

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[116] Cohabitation is not common in Sri Lanka. It is treated as unacceptable in wider Sri Lankan society although, before western colonization, relationship norms in Sri Lanka were more liberal (see Ponnambalam 1987; Knox 1989).

This tragic story of a female shopfloor worker in HotCo could be seen to exemplify, more or less, workers' contemporary lives in the industry, particular in the 'notorious' Katunayake FTZ (Devanarayana 1997; Attanapola 2005; *Makena Mathaka* 2007). Indeed the main character of the story resembles many characters the reader has already met in the cinematic texts, for example the quasi-prostitute in *Grahanaya* whose child is also looked after by her mother. Nevertheless, like in this story, this is not known by her work colleagues and boarding house mates. In addition to this intertextual nature Kumari's story tells how a mature factory woman becomes a *lamaya* (child/little one), disregarding her age, wage labour role and motherhood, even during the counselling process at HotCo. So the text reminds the reader again of the irrelevant nature of demographic characteristics of female shopfloor workers when it comes to doing, narrating and restoring their collective identity as *lamai* in the industry. Indeed, as in *Grahanaya,* it echoes the 'indissoluble' ethical paradox – which this utterance if not doing *lamai* identity tends to create – within which the mature, able worker, the mother, as well as her six year old child, the 'true child' (*baby*), both become little ones. Indeed doing the *lamai* identity continues in my fieldwork at HotCo. It emerges during my observation session on HotCo's factory floor as well as, more importantly, in my encounter with the Floor Manager.

The motherly voice

I am on the noisy busy factory floor at HotCo. The Floor Manger, Lalani, and I are standing in a corner of the floor after my observation session in the factory. The session is largely assisted first by Tharanga, the HR Executive, and then Lalani, who explain to me the technicalities of the factory floor. It seems to me that Lalani is already conditioned to this noisy congested place as she has more than fifteen years experience in the industry as a

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seamstress, a team leader, a supervisor and a production executive. Since 2002 she has been performing the role of Floor Manager at HotCo, although she joined ChillCo in 1989 as a seamstress.

Lalani is in her mid forties. She is married and has two school age daughters. She is pleasant, looks confident and wears jeans and a t-shirt. As I hear during my other interactive sessions in HotCo, Lalani is widely accepted as the 'motherly' manager on the floor. However, this motherly nature does not hinder her involvement in doing the *lamai* identity in HotCo nor totally dissolves her attachment to the gendered policy of promotion on the factory floor. Nor even does it disturb her utterance of the generalized terms on the floor and in the company such as 'issue girls', even though she is quite critical about doing the workers' identity as *lamai*. Thus, like other actors in HotCo, throughout the encounter – which lasts about 20 minutes – even when Lalani explains her role as the Floor Manager she freely utters the term and hence shows me her active role in doing *lamai* in HotCo.

Daughters, lamai and resistance to doing lamai

Nevertheless when I ask Lalani about the utterance, particularly the lowly identity of female shopfloor workers in the zone, her resistance to (doing) the identity emerges:

> I also have two *ganu lamai*.[117][I] love *lamai* here as my own *lamai* [children, daughters]. Always I tell *lamai* you are our *sampatha* [asset, treasure, resource]. If they are not here, if *lamai* who [are] seated here [are] not here, no one here will have jobs, [they] have nothing to do.

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[117] Here *ganu lamai* means Lalani's two daughters.

But Lalani's resistance to doing the *lamai* identity at HotCo is a paradox. On the one hand, the text tells us how the (female) shopfloor workers' wage labour role is praised in HotCo and indeed in the industry. Here Lalani, the narrator of the text, equates the workers with her own *ganu lamai* (daughters) and subsequently with *sampatha* which denotes a variety of different meanings such as asset, treasure, fortune, resource etc. The metaphor of *sampatha*, and hence the text itself in fact is ambiguous. It does not tell us what this resemblance – between daughters and workers – 'really' means in this particular con-text and what it really offers to the workers, because the reader already knows of the workers' very (non)existence in the industry, particularly in the *kalape*, as *lamai*.

On the other hand Lalani, more interestingly, utters the term *lamai* and thus shows her involvement in doing the *lamai* identity in HotCo. However, this doing remains largely unnoticed and unrealized in the text itself due to its nurturing exterior. Therefore, as the text embodies, Lalani's reluctance to accept and recognize the workers as mature proletarian women in the industry rather than *ganu lamai* (girls or daughters) in the family milieu is effaced without a trace. Indeed her resistance to (doing) the *lamai* identity, I argue, is itself a palatable means of restoring the identity – which Lalani uses consciously or unintentionally. This is further exposed as the encounter unfolds.

(*Doing*) *the lamai yet again*

Due to this paradox of Lalani's resistance to (doing) the workers' lowly identity in the zone – her hesitant about yet free utterance of the term itself – I return to the original puzzle, 'why *lamai*?', by reiterating my question again and again:

> **Dhammika:** Why are they called *lamai*? Isn't seamstress are often called *lamai*?

Floor Manager: [They are] called as *lamai* also. I mostly call by [their] names. If not [I call [them] as *duwe* [daughter].

Dhammika: Why are they called like that as you think?

Floor Manager: When we say *lamai* it is a bit distant.

Dhammika: Why are they called *lamai*? I hear [it] often here in HotCo.

Floor Manager: Now when we are talking with you, *Sir*, we can call as *lamai*. Now when we go near *lamai* we never call them *lamai*.

Dhammika: Call them by names?

Floor Manger: Call by name. If not call as *puthe*[118][son/daughter].

Dhammika: Why *puthe* [son/daughter]?

Floor Manager: The bond [with them] is high.

This interesting text again exemplifies the shifting nature of (doing) the *lamai* identity on HotCo's factory floor and how the identity adjusts and appropriates itself through what Derrida (1997) calls the chain of supplementation – adding to and filing by the residual/relational signifiers/identities such as *duwa* (daughter) and *putha* (son/daughter). It also embodies the narrator's awareness of what this identity 'really' does for the workers – makes them 'distant' if not alienated – on the factory floor. But, despite this 'consciousness', even during this (apparent) non-utterance of the term and indeed this attempt to un-do the *lamai* identity the term is being uttered and doing is being done. Indeed, as Lalani puts it, '…now when we go near *lamai* we never call them *lamai*'. Thus beyond what this narrator *does* mean and see the text tells us what she does *not* mean and see (Foucault 1972; Johnson 1981) as far as doing the *lamai* identity is concerned.

Thus, like many actors in HotCo, female managers freely utter the term whenever they refer to female shopfloor workers and wherever they portray the workers' collective selves in

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[118] In old Sinhala *puthe/putha* denotes both daughter and son. Nowadays it generally connotes son. However, sometimes the term is used to address daughters as well, as it perhaps signifies deep affection.

HotCo and so in the zone. But again, and despite this vivid (dis)appearance of the term in everyday utterances at HotCo, the term/identity *lamai* is virtually nonexistent in its official-*written* texts of (doing) HRM. Thus, as at ChillCo, the workers whom the reader confronts in these texts are not *lamai* but *kandayam samagika* (team member), trainee machine operator, and seamstress as in HotCo's employee handbook, for example. Therefore, as the reader has seen in the context of doing HRM at ChillCo, HotCo's official-written texts of (doing) HRM such as job application forms, interview evaluation forms, employee handbook etc. are keen to conceal and efface the workers' collective identity as *lamai.* On the other hand, when the term *lamai* appears in an oral text (of *un*doing HRM), as we have seen, doing HRM and so textual HRM normalizes and legitimatizes the appearance and hence doing the *lamai* identity. Indeed, despite its 'absent' in official-*written* texts of (doing) HRM, (doing) the *lamai* identity is everywhere in HotCo, primarily in the form of oral texts.

Tour of the absentees' boarding houses

It is a sunny, warm day in mid August. I am in the canteen at HotCo. I am waiting for the AMHR's call to visit the absent shopfloor workers' boarding houses – a daily routine of managing (female) shopfloor labour in HotCo and indeed in the zone. In a large rectangle-shaped hall full of lunch tables, a few workers are still having their lunch and suspiciously looking at me. Their dresses and the freedom they are having at the lunch table inform me that they are not shopfloor workers. I am tracing poems and *nisadas* (free verse) in my field notebook, written mostly by female shopfloor workers on the 'wall-newspaper' in the canteen. Suddenly I am interrupted by the canteen keeper:

> **Canteen Keeper**: Are you Dhammika, *Sir*?

> **Dhammika**: Yes.
>
> **Canteen Keeper**: Kumari *Miss* asked you to come to her room immediately, if you are going to see *lamai*.
>
> **Dhammika**: Thanks![I rush to the ground floor].

The canteen keeper's utterance of *lamai* – to which I am being conditioned day by day as my (dis)engagement with HotCo continues – exemplifies how the term (dis)appears in all places in HotCo whenever shopfloor workers' collective selves appear and are being referred to.

After a couple of minutes Kumari, a young female worker from the 'training band'[119] at HotCo whom I call Nelum and I get into a white van. Nelum sits on the front seat next to the driver while Kumari and I sit in the back. It is around 2 pm. We start our tour. Nelum is the navigator as she gives directions to the driver. On her lap there is a folder that contains the absentees' details – their names, addresses, photographs etc.[120] I ask Kumari not to introduce me as an outside research. So we agree to just ignore who I am unless people whom we were going to visit ask about me. This is, as I have explained in the methodology chapter (3), not only to avoid unnecessary attention to me during the tour but also to avoid any unnecessary burden to this important routine activity of (*un*doing) HRM at HotCo.[121]

After travelling for about twenty minutes (about 6-8 kilometres) on narrow village roads we reach our first 'target'. Unfortunately the absentee is hospitalized, as her elder sister tells

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[119] The section of HotCo where apprentices are trained, before they are introduced to the factory floor.

[120] As I encounter during the tour, most of these details are either not updated or incorrect. As I am later told by Kumari, some workers do not provide correct details so as to maintain their freedom to move from one company to another.

[121] However, on one occasion this agreement is breached as one absent employee wants to know whether I was a new member of ChillCo.

us. On our way to the next 'target' Kumari tells me that she knows that worker is suffering from a prolonged illness. By taking direction from pedestrians about 10 minutes late we reach the lodgings of our next 'target'.

We are in front of a line of small houses. A middle-aged woman (I assume that she is the owner of the boarding house) comes and suspiciously asks us:

> **Boarding House Owner**: Why [are you here]?
>
> **Nelum**: Is there *lamaya* called Ramani Priyanka in this house? [She] goes to HotCo.
>
> [The woman refers the query to a few young women in the boarding houses. It seems to me that they are workers in the zone who decided to not go to work today].
>
> **Boarding House Owner**: Is she told that she is in here? [As she is unable to recall 'Ramani Priyanka'].
>
> **Dhammika**: Show the photo [But it doesn't work as the photo is blurred].
>
> **Boarding House Owner**: Ask from that *lamaya* [the owner points out a young woman in the boarding house].

As the boarding house owner tells us there is a girl in the house called Ramani. But she doesn't know her other name. Moreover, the girl called Ramani is not in the house at the moment. She has gone to see a doctor as she is not well. As we are seemingly reaching another dead end, Kumari asks the young woman to tell 'Ramani Priyanka' a few members from HotCo came to see her and, if she is well enough, to ask her to go to HotCo tomorrow. So even on this tour – a means of *un*doing HRM in HotCo – female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* emerges. However, unlike in the work milieu, the tour exemplifies how the actors in HotCo and the *kalape* are equally involved in doing the workers' collective identity as *lamai*. The utterance of the term to refer to the workers and indeed doing their identity as *lamai* is vivid throughout the tour, despite the peculiar and apparently failed nature of the tour itself.

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This utterance, interestingly, comes mostly from Nelum whose identity is also *lamaya/lamai*, more or less, in the con-text of HotCo and indeed of the industry. In fact, as she utters when we reach our next 'target':

> **Nelum**: Is this No. 15/41? [to a middle-aged woman who comes from inside a small house].
> **Woman**: Yes [the woman responds]
> **Nelum**: Is there *lamayek* [a girl] called Chathuri Siriwardena [here], who goes to HotCo?

Here as well we are unable to attain our 'target', as 'Chathuri Siriwardena' has changed her boarding place two months ago, the woman tells us. Nevertheless this utterance embodies how the worker's proper name – Chathuri Siriwardena; the singularity of her identity – goes with and (dis)appears as part and parcel of her collective identity as *lamaya/lamai* in the industry.

Gradually as we reach the end of the working day at HotCo, we have to abandon our unfinished tour – which always remains unfinished as part and parcel (un)doing HRM in HotCo. So by visiting about eight boarding places – out of which we are able to attain three of our 'targets' – we end the tour and indeed sum up our endeavour of *un*doing HRM and hence (doing) the *lamai* identity at HotCo. This ending is temporal as both are in process. So the end is the (next) beginning (of the next end) just like the Buddha's notion of *paticcasamuppada* – 'dependent arising' – a process of happening without a horizon (Kalupahana 1999: 18). Therefore, now I move to my next interactive sessions at HotCo, to its environs, the *kalape*, where the company's 'human resources' lodge.

Unrealized voices

It is a Sunday, a free day for the factory workers in the zone. I go with a worker-feminist activist, Thanuja, from the Courage, an NGO in the *kalape*, to meet a few female shopfloor workers from HotCo, as I am unable to meet them within HotCo.[122] We enter a line of wooden houses. A few young women are watching a film on TV. Two of them are from HotCo and others also work in the zone. After Thanuja introduces me they invite us to their house. As there are no chairs they kindly ask us to sit on one of the beds. After a short friendly chat I brief the group about the purpose of my visit. However, the workers are still reluctant to have an encounter, as they perceive this as an unforeseen trouble for their career in HotCo. But finally, due to the encouragement of Thanuja, who is a trusted friend of many workers in the zone, they agree to talk to me if I do not record the discussion. Thus, unlike in my encounters with the workers in ChillCo, this remains as unfinished, represented in scattered notes in my field notebook. Nevertheless, like their poor living conditions, these workers' version(s) of HotCo and their own lives is different not only from their managers' version but even from that of their counterparts in ChillCo. This unique nature of their version of the industry as well as HotCo, however, does not prevent them uttering and indeed doing their identity as *lamai*. Rather, as I have already encountered in both companies, these workers as well utter the term *lamai* whenever they refer to themselves as individuals and whenever they portray their collective selves in the industry. For example, when I ask why most workers are not in their boarding houses today, one worker tells me:

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[122] The MHR of HotCo gave me the permission to interview female workers lodging in the company's hostel near the zone. Although I initially accepted this offer, I changed my mind after visiting the place when we went to see absent employees. The place and its boarders, as I encountered it, are under the close surveillance of the company as well as its matron. I will discuss this in detail in the next chapter (6).

> Lot of *lamai* are not [here] now. [They have] gone holiday [home].

Despite their common, generalized utterance of the term *lamaya/lamai*, as I experience it throughout the encounter which lasts about 40 minutes, I develop the workers' anecdotes based on one participant's version of HotCo. The reason for this selection is two-fold. It is, on the one hand, due to the scattered and unfinished nature of the encounter which is limited to my notes and memory. On the other hand, as the encounter unfolds, she emerges as the key narrator of the anecdotes. I call her Priyanthi.

Priyanthi, the shopfloor worker

Priyanthi is a machine operator or seamstress in HotCo. She is in her early forties. She has a thirteen year old son who is with her when we go to her boarding house, as he comes to live with his mother during the school vacation. Priyanthi has more than 13 years experience in the zone as a shopfloor worker, although she only joined HotCo two years ago. Due to this experience I ask her about her life then and now in the industry. As she points out:

> What we sewed in a week, before, now we sew within a day. When [the amount of] work increases, *lamaige targateka* [target of girls] also increases.

As Priyanthi explains to me, day by day the job is becoming more stressful and difficult as workers are supposed to achieve 'unattainable' targets. However, the target, as Priyanthi puts it, is not the target of workers but, ironically, of *lamai* – the collective identity of female shopfloor workers in the industry. This exemplifies the workers' unconsciousness about this utterance and indeed about doing their own collective identity as *lamai* in the industry.

These targets, as Priyanthi further elaborates, are set according to efficiency measurements of the industry. These measurements, as she points out, were minimal in the 1980s and even in the 1990s. They are a more recent development. Moreover, the targets create conflicts among the workers themselves, as Priyanthi narrates:

> If that is not done, next *lamaya* can't sew. Then the next *lamaya* [in the line] shouts… [Thus] *lamaya* does not go to lunch. *Lamaya* [girl] thinks 'I will sew on, and reach the target next hour'.

This encounter again narrates the way in which shopfloor workers if not *lamai* are 'plugged into' 'scientifically' engineered production lines within which they become mere apparatuses. Thus on the contrary to so-called teams as narrated in the official-written texts of doing HRM at HotCo the 'team members' whom the reader meets in this encounter become *lamai* who are compelled to be opponents of each other. These hidden apparatuses of (un)doing HRM at HotCo also mark the rupture of workers' collective selves in the industry. The inevitable competition on the factory floor, on the other hand, compels workers to postpone their lunch, something which I also noticed during my observation sessions at ChillCo and HotCo.[123] The lives of shopfloor workers if not *lamai* whom the reader confronts here, as the text narrates, are radically different from their lives as narrated in official-written texts and their oral versions of (doing) HRM in HotCo, even though they intermingle with each other.

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[123] For example at ChillCo, during the lunch interval, all the lights are off on the factory floor as part of the energy saving if not cost cutting policy of the company. However, even in this gloomy factory atmosphere, some workers work during their lunch interval. In one occasion I ask the OM of ChillCo why they don't go to have lunch. Interestingly he replies that 'ChillCo does not force them to work during their lunch. But they voluntarily work'. This 'voluntary' sacrifice, as I later realise, is induced by production incentives. If the workers are unable to achieve their target they will lose the incentives. So they sacrifice their lunch interval to achieve the target.

As the encounter unfolds, I ask the group their views about the JCC of HotCo. Here the sound of the other HotCo worker, Muditha, who is relatively young and inexperienced, is especially vivid in my notebook. Indeed as Muditha puts it:

> Workers' committee [*Sevaka Sabawa*] is to know *lamaige* [girls'] views. To get *lamaige* [girls'] consent.

As the reader has already realized from the JCC meeting in ChillCo, female shopfloor workers here as well utter the term *lamai* to portray their collective identity in relation to the JCC at HotCo. However, the text, its deep interior, also notifies the workers' awareness about the diluted nature of the JCC – a worker-management negotiation encounter – when Muditha utters '[it is] to get *lamaige* [girls'] consent'. So the text notifies us that the *lamai* are not little ones as such, even though they themselves utter the term and so do their collective identity as *lamai*. Rather they are proletarian women who are critical about their very (non)existence in the industry, particularly in the Katunayake FTZ (for example see *Vinischaya Karanu Mena* 1999; Perera 2008).

This critical approach to their lives in the zone is evident elsewhere in the encounter. For example, as Priyanthi summarizes their lives and their awareness about its monotonous, alienated nature:

> Once we go and sit down [on the line] in the morning [at 7.30 am] it is only for lunch [at 11.30 am] we get up again. Then we get up for the tea [tea break at 3.00 pm].

Unlike the female shopfloor workers at ChillCo, these workers are also subject to the enormous social pressure of the *kalape* and its actors such as boarding house owners, shop owners, neighbours etc. For example in the rainy season their boarding house becomes a

virtual *uru kotuwa* (pigsty), as the workers put it, as the house floods. This implies that how insignificant is the impact of the workers' glorified role in the industry on their very (non)existence in the *kalape* since their arrival in the industry (see Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; *Makena Mathaka* 2007). As I ask about their experience and awareness of utterance of *Juki lamai*, *Juki kello* (*Juki* girls) and the like, they tell me that they are aware of these utterances. But they are reluctant to narrate how these utterances become their own experience. And so they insist to me that although they are aware of them, they have not heard the utterances themselves.[124]

Thus, as this encounter exemplifies, the workers like other actors in HotCo as well as in the *kalape* utter the term *lamai* to refer to themselves and to do, narrate and portray their collective selves in the company and indeed in the Katunayake FTZ. However, their usage, as the text narrates, does not portray a lowly, derogatory identity. Rather it, on the one hand, appears as an 'innocent' generalized signifier that denotes their (*ganu*) *lamai* identity in the wider Sri Lankan society. On the other hand, it implies their conscious being as proletarian women in this localized global assembly line in the zone. However, this double-bind nature and so this innocent (dis)appearance of the term/identity *lamai* does not mean that their derogated identity – *Juki lamai* – in the industry is already effaced. Instead, as the encounter embodies and the reader has already seen it, this absent is just a spatiotemporal delay – its deferred presence – which the workers are quite uncomfortable and reluctant to accept.

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[124] The workers' verdict about the utterances is, however, denied by Thanuja on our way to her office, after the encounter. As she tells me, the workers are reluctant to tell their experiences to an outsider like me.

Coda

Like at ChillCo, the stories narrated at HotCo embody the ways in which different actors in the company gather together, intermingle and entwine to do, narrate and restore female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai*. However, this doing as well as the identity itself is fragmented, heterogeneous and even contradictory, although it (dis)appears under the collective signature of *lamai*. So the signifier/identity *lamai* tends to signify and portray an able, rigid and corrupted as well as a feeble, helpless and innocent identity as it oscillates from one con-text to another. So it is, as Derrida (1988b) tells us, a double- bind.

However, (doing) the *lamai* identity – its colloquial character – as we have seen, remains largely unnoticed and unrealized as it (dis)appears through the deceiving textual form of doing HRM at HotCo. So (doing) HRM in the context of HotCo and indeed in the zone, I argue, normalizes and legitimizes (doing) the *lamai* identity. Despite this legitimization and so 'innocent' (dis)appearance, the stories narrated at HotCo, particularly by 'men folks', embody that the term/identity *lamaya/lamai* in the con-text of HotCo and indeed of the 'notorious' Katunayake zone connotes and portrays a rather lowly, pejorative identity compared to when it appears or is uttered in the context of ChillCo and indeed outside the zone.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter synthesises and rereads stories narrated at two apparel manufacturing companies – ChillCo (located in a small village) and HotCo (in the Katunayake FTZ) – in Sri Lanka. So it exemplifies, illustrates, dissects and *re*narrates the ways in different actors in these two work milieus gather together, intermingle and entwine to do, narrate, restore

and even to undo female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai*. It also illustrates and problematizes the shifting, fragmented and unfinished nature of the identity which is always in process, awaiting the next supplement. The chapter argues, in a Derridian sense, that the *lamai* identity is a double-bind – able as well as feeble, good as well as naughty and so forth. Indeed it exemplifies how the aporia of this identity tends to blur the reader's realization of the 'truth' of (doing) female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* in the industry.

As the chapter further suggests part of this blurring is the way in which this (un)doing of the *lamai* identity takes place in the work milieu – through the deceiving textual form of doing HRM at ChillCo and HotCo. In this context the chapter shows how doing and undoing HRM and so textual HRM and local texts in these work milieus intermingle and entwine to normalize and legitimize the 'childrenization' of female shopfloor labour in the industry. Simultaneously it exposes the rupture of HRM – doing and undoing HRM – in the industry and the becoming of this phenomenon which appears as a series of events or texts which are woven, interwoven and negotiated by many different actors in HotCo and ChillCo – in which the sign(s) supplements the 'thing(s)' itself. Nevertheless the chapter does not suggest that this aporia of (doing) the *lamai* identity makes undoing the identity impossible, especially when workers speak up. Rather it implies the possibility of undoing the identity: it makes undoing possible. Therefore, as concluding remarks I argue that since doing the *lamai* identity is not a sole act of one villain in the industry or wider society, as we have seen it, the possibility of undoing may not be the sole act of a rebellious hero or heroine. Indeed to make this renarrating journey inclusive, I suggest, we need to know how multiple actors in the *kalape* – the backbone of the industry and so of (un)doing the *lamai*

identity as many claim (see Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; Hewamanne 2003; 2008; Attanapola 2005) – are involved in undoing as well as doing the *lamai* identity which we are going to dissect and problematize in the next chapter (6).

(Re)Narrating *Lamai*:
Un-doing *lamai* in the *kalape*[125]

Introduction

Sri Lanka's apparel industry, since its origin, has been operating as a kind of socio-economic and socio-political terrain within which multiple actors gather together and intermingle with each other. These actors, as we have already recognized, are directly or indirectly involved with the everyday affairs of the industry and hence with (un)doing the female workers' collective identity in the industry as *lamai*. This intermingling and involvement which is explicit in the industry, mainly in the context of the Katunayake FTZ, is, however, not by chance. Instead it is an inextricable part of the way in which the industry emerged in the nascent liberalized context of the country.

As we have seen the industry in this nascent liberalized context 'absorbed' many unemployed women, mostly rural young women, as shopfloor workers for its labour-intensive assembly line (Jayaweera 2000; 2002; de Silva 2002). However, neither the industry nor the architects of the liberal economy – i.e., the UNP government – made any considerable effort to safeguard the welfare and well-being of these migrant workers (Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997). These workers were thus subject to many very

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[125] The term *kalape* means 'zone' and indeed the FTZ. But, as I have already mentioned, for people in the Katunayake vicinity *kalape* does not mean only the FTZ within its artificial geographical boundary. Rather it is a much broader socio-geographical domain which also signifies the surrounding areas of the zone where the workers lodge, shop and the like as well as the zone itself. As this term problematizes the artificial boundary between the zone and its environs I use this term to highlight the blurring between the 'inside' and 'outside' of the Katunayake FTZ.

problematic forces and processes in the work milieu as well as the wider social context such as unattainable production targets; unlawful dismissals; inhumane punishments; verbal abuse; inadequate and unsuitable lodging, medical and transport facilities; sexual harassment and assaults and so forth (*Sunday Island* 1991; Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; Attanapola 2005; *Makena Mathaka* 2007; Samanmali 2007).

This peculiar nature of the industry, particularly in the Katunayake FTZ, also created a landscape for other social actors such as owners of boarding houses where the workers lodge, small shop (*kada*) owners/keepers whose 'target market' is the workers, worker-feminist activists and the like to play influential roles in the industry (see Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; Hewamanne 2003; 2008; Attanapola 2005). Therefore, at the very moment the industry emerged in the nascent liberalized context, these actors' roles in the industry, particularly in the *kalape*, emerged vis-à-vis determining and moulding the industry's and its workforce's, mainly migrant female shopfloor workers', very existence.

Thus, as the nexus of the texts of the industry suggests, these workers' lives in the factory milieu are not shaped and aligned by actors, policies, procedures, processes etc. of apparel manufacturing organizations in the industry alone. Instead these other social actors' roles in the industry, particularly in the *kalape*, are influential as far as the everyday social affairs and indeed the very existence of female shopfloor workers in the industry is concerned (see for example, Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; Attanapola 2005; Samaraweera 2006; *Makena Mathaka* 2007). This chapter, therefore, explores these other actors' involvement in doing, narrating and even undoing female shopfloor workers' collective identity as

lamai. Indeed it dissects and *re*narrates (doing) the *lamai* identity as it (dis)appears and is (re)narrated in the multiple texts that are woven and interwoven by these actors.

The chapter proceeds like this. First it dissects the boarding house owners and small shop owners/keepers' versions of doing the *lamai* identity based on my interactions with them during the fieldwork in the Katunayake FTZ. Then the chapter moves to explore and dissect some of these actors' attempts at *un*doing the *lamai* identity. Here it (re)reads oral and written texts which are woven and interwoven by the worker-feminist activists in the *kalape* as exemplars of *un*doing the identity. In this (re)reading the chapter also brings back 'dissident voices' of 'factory women' which largely remain unrealized or unheard in the factory milieu, but which do appear in the texts that are woven, interwoven and published by the worker-feminist collectives. Here the chapter critically engages with how these women factory workers creatively use the terms/signifiers *lamai*, *Juki* etc. – which signify and do their 'lowly' 'pejorative' collective identity in the industry – simultaneously to portray and critique their very (non)existence in the industry and indeed to *un*do their collective identity as *lamai*. Further it dissects how these 'undoing' attempts nonetheless also tend to do and to restore the *lamai* identity – aporias of 'undoing'. In its concluding remarks the chapter argues that the impossibility of *re*narrating the *lamai* identity is also its possibility – even when the signifier *lamai* is uttered and appears – as it makes the *un*doing possible. However, the undoing is always at a great risk as it is always in a position to do and to restore female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* – its deferred derogated presence in the industry, particularly in the *kalape*, as *Juki lamai*, *Juki kello* (*Juki* girls) if not *Juki keli* (*Juki* pieces).

Inside – Outside

My (dis)engagement with the Katunayake FTZ and its actors is a puzzle. I always found it difficult to demarcate boundaries between the zone and its outer environs, especially between the actors in HotCo and those I met in the outer environs by erasing the distinction between the 'inside' and the 'outside' of the zone (Derrida 1981). Nevertheless, any day I went to the zone I was required to get an entry pass approved by HotCo to bypass its tight security. This symbolic entry pass, however, never helped me to solve my puzzle. The puzzle still remains unsolved and even emerges when I attempt to analyse my data.

The 'mother superior'

The Matron of HotCo's hostel for unmarried female shopfloor workers is one exemplar of this puzzle. I call her Wimala. Wimala is unmarried and in her late fifties. She has been the Matron for the hostel for more than 10 years. Wimala hardly takes any leave. She lives in the hostel itself. Her duty time is thus virtually twenty-four hours, seven days a week. Indeed, if the common employment law and practice in the industry and hence HotCo were applicable to Wimala, she should already have retired from her job.[126] Despite this, she is still the head of the hostel. As I interpret it, Wimala is in fact neither an ordinary employee of HotCo nor an owner of this hostel or boarding house. Rather her role appears as the role of 'Mother Superior' of this 'girls' hostel'. Thus Wimala's role cannot be defined merely according to official discourses of HotCo or even of the industry itself. It is, on the contrary, shaped and aligned by the discourses and norms of 'disciplining' unmarried young women and indeed moulding 'Good girls', as Lynch (2007) puts it, in the industry,

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[126] In Sri Lanka the commonly accepted retirement age is 55 years.

particularly in the *kalape*. Thus I articulate Wimala's role as part and parcel of the boarding house owners' version of (re)narrating the *lamai* identity instead of the actors in HotCo.

The girls' hostel and its lamai

My encounter with Wimala is not a pre-planned one. It is a surplus of the tour of the absentees' boarding-houses which unfolded in the previous chapter, 'A Tale(s) of Two Cities'. It is around 4 o'clock. We go to the hostel on our way to HotCo after visiting the boarding houses. A U-shaped one storey building, it is a typical girls' hostel surrounded by a tall wall – at least eight feet high – connected to the boundary wall of the building. Its large gate is guarded by round the clock security. At the centre of the U there is a courtyard with a mango tree, a few flower bushes and a small *Budu Madura* (shrine to the Buddha). The hostel's TV room is in one corner of the U-shaped building. Its large clean kitchen – consisting of a line of gas burners and a refrigerator – is at the middle of the U-shape.

Kumari, the AMHR of HotCo, introduces me to Wimala. While wandering around the hostel I begin my informal chat with her which takes around 20 minutes.[127] Through the open windows of the rooms I can see beds, mosquito nets – mostly coloured a 'girlish' pink – and some workers' belongings. Wimala's role as the Matron if not the Mother Superior in this girls' hostel emerges at the very beginning of the encounter:

> **Dhammika**: How is doing the work [here]?
> **Wimala**: It is a huge battle [*loku satanak*].
> **Dhammika**: Why is called a battle [*satanak*]?
> **Wimala**: Protecting these *ganu lamai* [girls] is very difficult.

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[127] As I have mentioned in the methodology chapter (3) my encounters with all the actors in the *kalape* took place in Sinhala.

Dhammika: Isn't easy?

Wimala: Not easy.

Dhammika: Why is calling not easy?

Wimala: There is a responsibility [*wagakeemak*], *Sir*.[128]

Dhammika: Is that means there is an influence of their [workers'] families?

Wimala: No *Sir*, when [the workers are] send [to the hostel by their parents I] need to give a responsibility [*wagakeemak*] [to their parents]. [129]

For Wimala the boarders in the hostel are neither 'boarders' as such nor the waged female workers in the industry. Rather they are unmarried young women – *ganu lamai*. So as the text embodies she is obliged to 'protect' these *ganu lamai* as she is obliged to the *lamai's* parents who send their unmarried daughters to the girls' hostel. This obligation or responsibility is not laid down by HotCo itself. Rather it is largely a socially driven obligation. As a result Wimala (and the residents) are compelled to articulate their own code of conduct. According to this unwritten code of conduct, for example, no man – other than officially permitted members of HotCo – even a father of one of the boarders is allowed to enter the hostel premises. When I ask about the possibility of interviewing the workers at the hostel premises, I am asked to come with Kumari or with another woman, preferably my wife.

So this code of conduct goes far beyond doing HRM in HotCo – whose policies, as we have seen, do not ask even about the marital status of job applicants and which more interestingly is ready to recruit HIV positive job applicants – and thus is deeply rooted in discourses of purity and chastity of the ideal Sinhala-Buddhist womanhood in post-

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[128] Throughout this chapter I italicize the English terms appear in the original Sinhala texts.
[129] This effectively means Wimala's obligation to the parents who send their unmarried daughters to the hostel.

independence Sri Lanka (Jayawardena 1994; 2000; Hewamanne 2003; 2008; Jayawardena and Seneviratne 2005; Lynch 2007). Thus Wimala's role is not a mere role of Matron which is governed by her employment contract with HotCo and indeed by doing HRM at HotCo. On the contrary, it is a 'battle' of 'protecting' these unmarried young women if not daughters – their purity, chastity and virginity – which is largely governed by the discursive formation of ideal womanhood in wider Sri Lankan society in general and of 'good girls' in the zone environs in particular (Hewamanne 2003; 2008; Lynch 2007).

The code of conduct

In this discursive context there is also no room for these boarders' collective identity as adult waged labourers in the industry and indeed as proletarian women in the Global South (Perera 2008). Rather their identity always emerges, is done, remains and is restored as *lamai* – little ones. As Wimala further utters:

> **Dhammika**: Until when [the boarders/workers are] allowed to come here?
> **Wimala**: Allowed until 9 [p.m.].
> **Dhammika**: [What about] on Sunday [the holiday]?
> **Wimala**: On Sundays *lamai* are going here and there. They come back around 8 [p.m.].

Thus not only in the factory milieu but also in the hostel milieu, even on holidays, the workers' conduct is determined and reinforced by a largely unwritten code of conduct like that which governs the conduct of 'little ones' in wider Sri Lankan society, particularly in the family and school contexts . This enclosure of their behaviour, I argue, is not arbitrary, but an enclosure which goes with their collective identity as *lamai* – rural, 'inexperienced', 'immature' beings in the industry who had to stay in the 'notorious' Katunayake FTZ (Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; Attanapola 2005).

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But this enclosure and hence this doing of the workers' collective identity as *lamai* and indeed moulding 'good girls' does not always remain unchallenged. It is subject to resistance. The resistance, however, emerges primarily in the means of refusing to stay in the hostel at all or leaving it. Thus, disregarding the relatively low cost and the reasonable facilities, 27 beds at the hostel – out of 100 – remain vacant. When I ask about this, Wimala responds as follows:

> **Dhammika:** Now, why they [workers] don't like to stay here rather than other boarding [houses]?
>
> **Wimala:** Why dislike.., in other boarding [houses, the boarders] go and come any time [as they prefer]. Here there is a law.

Neither Wimala nor Kumari is able to give me a reasonable answer about the rationale and fairness of this 'law' when I remind them that the boarders are adult, self-sufficient employees who are perhaps the breadwinners for their families (de Silva 2002; *Dabindu* 2006a; *Dabindu* 2006b; *Dabindu* 2007a). Instead this '*de facto* law' is deemed 'acceptable' and should be 'accepted' within the 'jurisdiction' of the hostel in which the boarders are treated and remain as *lamai*. Thus the 'rebellious' workers who resist this law have to earn their 'freedom' at considerable socio-economic expense, because the majority of the so-called privately owned boarding houses where they 'choose' to live do not provide even basic living facilities for the boarders. Moreover, they are relatively expensive (S*unday Island* 1991; Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997). Further, in the discursive context of the hostel as well as in the *kalape*, 'escaping' from the hostel may also mean seeking 'unlimited freedom' which tends to run counter to norms of 'good conduct' and hence the identity of 'good girls' in the *kalape*.

Thus this 'freedom' does not obliterate (doing) the 'rebellious' boarders' collective identity as *lamai* in these other boarding places in the industry. Rather it traces and subsequently affirms their (deferred) derogated identity as garment or *kalape lamai*/*kello* (zone girls) and more importantly as a 'roguish' group in the zone – as we will see in the next section.

Village, city and zone

After my encounter with Priyanthi and her colleagues – HotCo's female shopfloor workers – which I have analyzed in the previous chapter (5), I was able to interview the owner of their boarding house, Siril. The activist Thanuja, who facilitated my encounter with Priyanthi and her colleagues, also introduces me to Siril. They know each other well. This middle-aged gentle family man thus agrees to share his experiences as a boarding house owner with me, as I brief him about the purpose of my project. So we commence our encounter on the veranda of Siril's own house. It takes around 30 minutes.

The veranda is a rectangular open area with a few chairs and a stool from where I can see Priyanthi's boarding house and the narrow road that leads to other boarding houses in this rather congested suburban area. Siril's wife, a middle-aged woman who I call Malani, also joins us as she is quite enthusiastic about the matter we are going to discuss. So, as the encounter unfolds, Malani voluntarily explains her views and experiences, particularly when we come to the conduct of the boarders and when Siril forgets to add something. Nevertheless the key narrator's role is performed by Siril.

Siril is a businessman. He operates an ice-cream parlour in the nearby city, Negombo. But like many in his village he has been also running a boarding house in his garden since the

mid 1990s. He is now quite worried about his late entry into this lucrative business – running boarding houses – because many of his neighbours entered the market at the beginning of the zone. However, for Siril it also represents a business for earning money without doing anything. Siril's boarding house is five small rooms with a shared kitchen. The rooms adjoin each other like a line house on a plantation estate. It provides shelter for around 10-12 zone workers. All the boarders are female shopfloor workers in the apparel industry. Unlike the residents of HotCo's girls' hostel, the boarders in Siril's boarding house enjoy considerable freedom. Nevertheless Siril and especially Malani are still quite vigilant about the boarders' (mis)conduct.

Siril describes the income from the boarding house as his additional income. But as the encounter unfolds it appears as the major or stable income source for his family. Despite this, Siril is quite critical about the zone and the industry and is also sympathetic about the boarders' lives in the *kalape*. But neither this critique nor sympathy prevent him uttering the term *lamai* to refer to the boarders and indeed to do their *lamai* identity in the industry. Therefore, as the encounter unfolds, this doing of the *lamai* identity, more crucially, categorizes the boarders as a particular group that resides in the *kalape*, when I ask Siril about the relationship of the boarding house owners with the boarders:

> **Siril**: Some keep that group [*oya kandayama*] a distance. So [they] don't concern much, if
> something has happened to them [the boarders]. We are not exactly like them [other
> owners]. To a certain level [we have a relationship]. If something has happened to
> them we participate. Happening like a funeral.[130]
> […]

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[130] In Sri Lanka attending a funeral is considered as an important social obligation.

We have some relationship. So [we] associate [with them] to a certain level. Not much. So not [we don't push] them to a corner. So is that human, to [keep] them so distance? Because [they are] not helpless people without shelters [in their villages]. That is the way we look at [them]. On the other hand, [they are] *duppath lamai* [poor girls].

Despite Siril's 'sympathetic' approach, even at the very beginning of the encounter the boarders are categorized as a group – 'that group' (*oya kandayama*) – and subsequently (re)named as 'poor girls' – *duppath lamai*. Thus, as in other multiple texts which are woven and interwoven in the context of the *kalape*, the boarders whom the reader confronts in this text are not the adult factory women workers nor even boarders *per se*. Rather they remain as *lamai* if not being (re)named as *duppath lamai* (poor girls). This (re)naming and hence doing of the boarders as *duppath lamai* reminds the reader of the manner in which the workers who are subordinated as *lamai* in the factory milieu also become a subordinated, 'roguish' group in the boarding milieu. Nevertheless the majority of boarding house owners' – the key protagonists of this (re)naming and hence subordinating process – only income is the income of their boarding houses.

Lowly acts – lowly identity

This process of (re)naming the already named and hence of subordinating an already subordinated 'group' – the boarders/workers – is, however, not merely due to their economic circumstances. Nor is it due to their class/occupation as factory women in the zone. Rather, as the encounter unfolds, it emerges as an outcome of (mis)conduct and indeed of 'lowly acts/works' (*pahath weda*) by the boarders/workers. As Siril narrates:

Dhammika: Within this *kalape* is there a tendency of marginalizing this *lamai*? [131]

Siril: Within the *kalape*?

Dhammika: When compared with other village folks [*game aya*] is there a tendency of treating them [the workers] being separated [from the village folks]?

Siril: Happen to some extent. There is a thinking of that lowly assessment [among the village folks].

Dhammika: Why has it gone to that state, as you think, Mr. Siril?

Siril: That would happen perhaps due to some works [*weda*] done by these *lamai*. So there are some who do *pahath weda* [lowly works/acts] within that group. The *lamai* there [in that group], there are some *lamai* who do that type of *weda* [works/acts]. They do not care much about cleanliness, do not love to the [boarding] place [they] live.., perhaps due to the way [they were] groomed in [their rural] villages. When [we] see that type of *weradi wed* [wrongdoings] continually we also happen to think [that] this is the way [they were] groomed in [their rural] villages. Village folks [*game aya*] here also think in that way. [The village folks] know [that they are] *duppath lamai* [poor girls]. On the other hand, they [the workers] do not have higher education, may have ordinary level. [132] Why, it can be guessed when looking at those poor parents [of the workers], can be guessed their problems, the present situation of the country, their class. [The villagers] may think in that way that lowly thinking [about the workers]. Also [this is] due to works [*weda*] done by *lamai*. There are some who behave indecently. So there are some who creep without paying credits of shops [*kada*] they shopped, unnecessary love affairs [*anawashya prema sambandatha*],[133] may that [lowly assessment] be due to that type of things?

Thus even in this text, which marks Siril's critique of the *kalape*, the boarders whom we encounter are not adult factory women in the apparel industry, but *lamai*. Ironically these

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[131] As we have seen elsewhere, during my encounters with the different actors of the apparel industry, I also used the term *lamai* to refer to the female workers. This was either to adapt to the scenario as it emerged or to observe the way in which the participant/s of the encounter followed and repeated my utterance.

[132] This is the Grade 10 examination which is known as the G.C.E. Ordinary Level conducted and assessed by the Department of Examination of Sri Lanka.

[133] This connotes a relationship with more than one boyfriend or an extramarital relationship. It may also connote a sexual relationship even with the boyfriend or fiancé before getting married.

lamai, as the text unfolds, are again supplemented by the signifier/identity *duppath lamai* (poor girls). As part and parcel of this process the text reiterates the terms 'that group' (*oya kandayama*) to highlight this 'roguish' group's status/identity and so reaffirms the boarders' very (non)existence in the *kalape* as *lamai*, chiefly as *duppath lamai* (poor girls).

This group/collective status if not identity, as the text embodies, however, does not occur by chance. Rather it goes with many underprivileged socio-economic characteristics of the boarders – their education, family background, poverty and so on. In this list the text nonetheless emphasises the boarders' (mis)conduct, particularly their 'lowly works/acts' (*pahath weda*) over and over again. So the text, as it unfolds, tends to synthesize a correlation between these 'lowly works/acts' and the doers of the works/acts – the *lamai*. Indeed the text reminds the reader that when the term *lamai* appears or is uttered to refer to female shopfloor workers in the con-text of the *kalape* it does not denote its relatively honoured meaning in wider Sri Lankan society. Rather it tends to signify the boarders' lowly derogated identity in the industry, because they commit 'lowly works/acts' (*Sunday Island* 1991; Hewamanne 2003; 2008).

Paradoxically enough the text embeds these 'lowly works' and hence the lowly identity of the boarders as *lamai* and *duppath lamai* (poor girls) in their rural village roots and indeed in the way in which they are brought up in the villages. Thus the text here, I argue, employs the urban (*nagaraya*)–rural (*gama*) dualism in post-independence Sri Lanka (Marecek 2000; Lynch 2007) to portray the boarders as naïve rustic beings who do the 'lowly works/acts' which the text has already traced. So it demarcates the (apparent) gap between the villagers/boarding house owners – urban people (*nagarikayo*) – and the boarders, rustic

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girls (*gode lamai*). Confusingly, moreover, the term village (*gama/game*) in this text, when uttered as an adjective – *game aya* (village folks) – in fact not only denotes the inhabitants of Siril's village, a suburban area situated 29 Kilometres from Colombo, who are actually *nagarikayo* (urban folks). It also, more crucially, is used to mark the naïve and 'uncultured' nature of the boarders – *gode* (*duppath*) *lamai* (rustic (poor) girls) – when it is used as a noun (*gama*) to show their rural roots. In post-independence Sri Lanka the term(s) *gama* (village) or *game/gode* (rural/rustic) and hence *gamiyo* (rural village folks) and particularly *godoyo* (rustic folks) largely connote 'backward' socio-economic conditions and characteristics considered to be traditional, poor, dirty, unsophisticated and the like. *Nagaraya* (urban/city) and hence *nagarikayo* (urban folks) are by contrast associated with being modern, rich, educated and so on. Nevertheless this same *gama* (rural village) is also idealized as an uncorrupted, tranquil domain where 'pure Sinhala-Buddhist culture' is preserved and hence uncorrupted innocent rural folks (*gamiyo*) live (Marecek 2000; Lynch 2007).

This palatable textual strategy, I argue, thus tends to erase the reader's realization of the interplay between the boarders' class/occupation as factory/proletarian women in the industry in the zone and their collective identity as *ganu lamai* (young women or girls) in wider Sri Lankan society if not as *game duppath lamai* (rural poor girls) in the *kalape*. Subsequently, by creating a link between the rural roots of the workers and their 'lowly works/acts' (*pahath weda*) it paradoxically tends to rupture the innocent identity of idealized rural people in general and the innocent 'good girl' identity of rural girls in particular in post-independence Sri Lanka, an identity which is also portrayed mainly by the politicians and HotCo's MHR. Indeed alongside the hollowed nature of the signifier –

villagers – it not only reminds us of the fragile nature of and relationship between the centre and periphery (see Derrida 1978; Spivak 1985; 2001; Barthes 2000). It also, more crucially, suggests that this 'roguish' group status of the boarders and hence their lowly collective identity as *lamai* and *duppath lamai* (poor girls) in the *kalape* are not 'things' that go with their class/occupation as female shopfloor workers who are oppressed, marginalized and objectified in the factory milieu in the zone (Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; *Makena Mathaka* 2007). Rather it is mainly due to their 'lowly works/acts' *(pahath weda)* which rupture their disposition as *asarana/ahinsaka lamai* (helpless/innocent girls) and indeed the identity of ideal Sinhala-Buddhist womanhood in post-independence Sri Lanka or if not of 'good girls' in Sri Lankan modernity (Jayawardena 1994; 2000; Lynch 2002; 2007; Hewamanne 2003; 2008). The text in fact suggests that these 'lowly works' and indeed the lowly identity of the boarders as *lamai* in the *kalape* is a signification as well as an outcome of the moral plight of the 'notorious' Katunayake FTZ within which innocent (migrant) 'good girls' become 'naughty girls' (see *Sunday Island* 1991; Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; Hewamanne 2003; 2008; Attanapola 2005).

Thus the boarders portrayed in this text are not the authentic innocent/helpless (*ahinsaka/asarana*) 'good girls' of the ideal(ized) rural villages as portrayed in a variety of different texts woven and interwoven by many different social actors such as politicians, managers etc. They are, on the contrary, morally corrupted 'naughty girls', the Other of 'good girls', who often commit 'lowly works/acts'. More crucially, they indulge in sex – 'unnecessary (*anawashya*) love affairs' – like the girls whom the reader has already confronted in the cinematic texts in particular. Nevertheless the majority of these 'naughty

girls' are actually the same migrant rural young women (Jayaweera 2000; de Silva 2002; Hewamanne 2003; 2008).

Moulding 'good girls'

Thus, as the encounter unfolds, like Matilda, the boarding house owner in *Kinihiriya Mal* for example, both Siril and Malani insist on their responsibility – moulding 'good girls'. Malani – as a middle-class and middle-aged woman, who is worried about how to 'protect' her two teenage sons from these 'naughty girls', emphasises that she works hard to eradicate their 'misconduct', principally the 'unnecessary (*anawashya*) love affairs'. As she narrates:

> **Malani:** So some [people], I don't know [why]. There are people in *boarding* [boarding owners] who rather neglect *lamai*. [They] do not watch and control. What we have said [the boarders], in this area of us [you] can talk [with boys/boyfriends] from here to there, from there to here, there to here. Because I have two *pirimi lamai* [boys, sons]. What I have said [the boarders], those [unnecessary love affairs] can't be here. If there is such [naughty] one, [she is] kicked out [of the boarding house].

Thus not only in the work milieu and HotCo's girls' hostel, but also in the private boarding houses the boarders are subject to a 'code of conduct' which they must obey. However, Malani's comments – like the code of conduct in HotCo's girls' hostel as described by Wimala – do not tell us the basis of this *de facto* law imposed by the owners of the boarding houses. Nevertheless it reminds us that those who are subject to the code are not adults but *lamai* – little ones. Indeed it suggests that they are either a vulnerable group in terms of the 'moral plight' of the city in general and the 'notorious' Katunayake FTZ in particular – like Trilishiya, Rathie and Sanduni in the cinematic texts – or already corrupted 'naughty girls' (*Sunday Island* 1991; Hewamanne 2003; 2008; Lynch 2007). Therefore,

they should be either restored or protected if they are 'good girls' or 'kicked out' if they are 'naughty girls'. The text in fact remains silent about the boarders' affiliation with the localized global assembly line in the industry as shopfloor workers who are adults and more often the breadwinners for their families (de Silva 2002; *Dabindu* 2006a; *Dabindu* 2006b; *Dabindu* 2007a). Instead it emphasises their (mis)conduct, particularly 'love affairs' and indeed their sexuality, as young women in Sri Lankan society.[134] Indeed it suggests to us that this lowly identity of the workers as *lamai* is a 'thing' that goes with and is due to their 'lowly works/acts', particularly of their 'unnecessary love affairs'.

(In)solubility of class

This (apparent) disjunction between the workers' class/occupation as factory women in the industry and their 'lowly works/acts' and hence their lowly identity as *lamai* in the *kalape* is nonetheless negated by the text, as it unfolds. These 'lowly works/acts' and hence the lowly identity is not an absolute outcome of the workers' rural village lives, the way in which they were brought up there, or even of their educational background. It is also, more crucially, embedded in their class/occupation as factory women in the industry in the zone.

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[134] Throughout the encounter Siril as well as his wife, Malani, enthusiastically narrate and insist on the 'unnecessary love affairs' of the boarders. This happens even in their reply to my query about how long boarders reside in their boarding house. Here they explain to me how one boarder from a remote rural village left the boarding house a month after, after she was told what is 'right (*hari*) and wrong (*weradi*)' by Malani. This boarder had asked permission to let her boyfriend stay in her room for a night. Constructing workers' identity as *naraka lamai* (naughty girls) upon their 'love affairs' and indeed based upon their sexuality is also vivid in a rather informal encounter which I had with one of the small shop (*kada*) owners (*mudalali*) in Siril's village. As this middle-aged man narrates on Sundays the guesthouses in Avariayawatta vicinity are overcrowded with 'young couples' – the female zone workers (*kalape lamai*) and their boyfriends and also female workers and their male managers. In the Sri Lankan context premarital sexual relationships, primarily those of women, are widely considered as 'bad conduct', as should be clear by now, which ruptures their 'decent' identity (Lynch 2007; Hewamanne 2003; 2008). However, as Thanuja, the worker-feminist activist of the Courage, told me, the shop owner's version of the workers' love affairs is a rather excessively eroticised version of their sexuality.

So it entwines and goes with the adjective/signifier 'garment' or *kalape* and hence appears as garment or *kalape lamai*. As Siril narrates:

> **Dhammika:** Normally is there a tendency of calling them as *garment lamai*?
>
> **Siril:** Yes, yes, yes, there is.
>
> **Dhammika:** *Garment lamai*, is [this] because of they work there [in the industry] or if not due to any other reason? That means whatever the job done [they] are commonly called as *garment lamai*.
>
> **Siril:** *Garment lamai*, *kalape lamai*.
>
> **Dhammika:** Is called as *Juki lamai*?
>
> **Siril:** There was something like that. There was a trend of even called as *Juki keli* [*Juki* pieces – Siril is laughing]. Now [this nickname] is not in usage widely. That's the ways [they] are addressed. Normally even in a *campus*, may be called as *campus kello* [campus girls]. Like that these *lamai* are called as *garment lamai*. There is no any other term to call it [them]. Isn't there?

Thus the *lamai* or *duppath lamai* (poor girls) whom we have already encountered are not an alien group who live in the *kalape*. Rather they are factory women – garment or *kalape lamai* – who are 'plugged into' the localized global assembly line in the industry in the zone. As such their collective identity in the *kalape* as *lamai* and *duppath lamai* (poor girls) is not a 'thing' that has been constructed exclusively based upon their village roots, 'lowly works/acts' etc. Nor is it a mere signification of their *ganu lamai* identity in wider Sri Lankan society. On the contrary, it emerged at the very moment these migrant rural young women appeared in the industry in the zone. Thus the signifier/identity *lamai* in the *kalape* context, this text reminds us, does not denote its rather innocent meaning and so the relatively honoured identity of *lamai* in wider Sri Lankan society. In contrast, it is the deferred presence of the workers' lowly derogated collective identity in the *kalape* as

garment or *kalape lamai* if not *Juki keli* (*Juki* pieces) (Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; Lynch 2007; Hewamanne 2003; 2008).

This text thus shows the interplay between the boarders' collective identity as *ganu lamai* (young women or girls) in wider Sri Lankan society and their occupational/class identity as factory women in the industry in the zone, which remained largely suppressed and unsaid at the beginning of the encounter with Siril and Malani. It also embodies how the boarders/workers' collective identity in the *kalape* has been variously portrayed, its shifting and fragmented nature, since the workers 'unwelcome' arrival in the industry (Devanarayana 1997; Hewamanne 2003; 2008; Lynch 2007). Indeed it tells us about the way in which these same boarders are categorised and subsequently objectified and othered as garment/*kalape lamai* if not *Juki keli* (*Juki* pieces) in the *kalape* regardless of whether they are 'good girls' or 'naughty girls', bracketing their heterogeneous nature.

Paradoxically enough the text, as it unfolds, also links the workers' collective identity as *lamai* to female students in the Sri Lankan university system and indeed 'garment *kello*' to 'campus *kello*' which is a relatively privileged term and hence identity in wider Sri Lankan society.[135] In so doing the text erases what it has already traced – the boarders as a 'roguish' group and their lowly identity as *duppath lamai* (poor girls) and subsequently

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[135] In Sri Lanka the university entrance examination (G.C.E. Advanced Level) is regarded as the most competitive examination in the country, as the universities absorb a very limited number of students – around 15 percent of those who are qualified to apply. As a result, those who are able to enjoy this free higher education opportunity are usually considered as intelligent and able, perhaps as the 'crème de la crème' by fellow citizens. So being an undergraduate in the university system is an honoured status/identity in Sri Lanka, even though female and male students alike are subject to many structural and economic constraints. Further, addressing female students as campus *kello* is not a common practice like the name garment *lamai*/*kello* for the female factory workers.

garment/*kalape lamai*/*kello*. So it suggests that this utterance of the term *lamai* and indeed this doing of the *lamai* identity in the con-text of *kalape* is an 'innocent' generalized practice that goes with or is due to the workers' collective identity as *ganu lamai* in wider Sri Lankan society, where female university students may also (albeit rarely) be called 'campus *kello*'. This sudden resemblance thus tends to upset the reader's realization of the 'truth' of (doing) the *lamai* identity in the industry in the zone. Nevertheless the 'original' oral text also records 'laughter' when Siril utters the term *Juki keli* (*Juki* pieces) and so reminds to us that (doing) garment/*Juki kello* is not as innocent as campus *kello*.

This quandary of the text and indeed of the *lamai* identity itself, as the reader has already encountered, is in process. It always erases what it has traced and vice versa. Therefore, as the text unfolds, it ruptures its own resemblances and consequently reaffirms, more vociferously, the interplay between the boarders' *ganu lamai* identity in wider Sri Lankan society and their class/occupational identity as factory women in the zone which emerged at the very moment they appeared in the industry:

> **Dhammika:** Mr. Siril, is this calling as *lamai* uttered at the beginning [of the zone], as you can remember?
>
> **Siril:** Calling as *garment lamai*? Yes, yes, *garment lamai*, *garment kello* [girls].
>
> **Dhammika:** Does it come out to degrade [the workers]?
>
> **Siril:** So now, there is no any other term to identify these *lamai*. It is uttered in a lowly manner. *Kalape kello* [zone girls]. *Garment kello* [garment girls]. So that's the way it is uttered [Siril is laughing again]. Really there is no any other term [name] to call [them], isn't there?

Female shopfloor workers' identity as garment *kello/lamai*, as this text embodies, is not the identity of campus *kello* (campus girls) *per se*. Rather it is 'uttered in a lowly manner' and

so manifests a lowly identity. So the resemblance which Siril has attempted to establish is not a resemblance as such. Instead the text reiterates that the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers in the industry in the *kalape* con-text is not as innocent as their *ganu lamai* identity in wider Sri Lankan society. Nor is it as privileged as campus *kello* (campus girls). It is in fact not a 'thing' which these migrant young women have originally brought either from wider Sri Lankan society or even from their rural villages, but a sign/signifier which substitutes for the thing itself – the estranged labour of factory women in the industry in the zone. So female shopfloor workers in the con-text of *kalape* no longer remain as mere *ganu lamai* (young women or girls). On the contrary, rupturing their innocent *ganu lamai* identity they have become garment or *kalape lamai* since their arrival in the industry. Indeed when Siril utters 'Calling as *garment lamai*? Yes, yes, *garment lamai*…' this, I argue, not only reaffirms the boarders/workers' lowly collective identity as *lamai* if not garment *or kalape lamai* (zone girls). It also, more importantly, embodies the manner in which the *ganu lamai* identity of these migrant rural young women – called as *lamai* – is obliterated and subsequently substituted by garment/*kalape lamai* (garment/zone girls) at the very moment they appear in the *kalape* (*Sunday Island* 1991; Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997).

The text, therefore, recounts to us that the 'disappearance' of garment, *kalape* or *Juki lamai/kello* – the lowly, derogated collective identity of female shopfloor workers – in everyday utterances in the con-text of the *kalape* and their 'evaporation' in official-written texts of the industry in the mid 1980s is just a spatiotemporal delay. So it always emerges at the very moment its spatiotemporal conditions are fulfilled. Nevertheless it mostly remains suppressed and hidden in everyday utterances in the con-text of the *kalape*. And indeed, as

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this text embodies, it is effaced at the very moment it is traced. As such, even though the text constantly utters the term *lamai*, *kalape kello* (zone girls) etc. and even though it reaffirms the lowly identity done and signified by this utterance and doing, it ironically tends to 'mend' the rupture which it has already done to its own resemblance – garment *kello* (garment girls) and campus *kello* (campus girls). The text, its interrogative modality[136] – i.e., 'isn't there?'– in fact again puts the reader who faces the text/the identity into a quandary and suggests it is an innocent, generalized utterance that denotes or goes with the boarders/workers' *ganu lamai* identity in the wider Sri Lankan society.

This negation of the already negated assertion, this dangerous supplement and hence this becoming of the *lamai* identity in the *kalape* is, however, not limited to the boarding house owners like Siril and his wife's version(s) of the identity. It – along with the notions of 'good girls' and 'naughty girls' – is similarly explicit in other social actors' versions of the identity, even in a rather informal encounter which I had with a small shop owner (*mudalali*) in Siril's village, whom the reader has already met through his comments on the workers' sexuality in footnote 134. He is also sarcastic about the boarders and the *kalape* as a whole. So, although this vigilant shop owner (*mudalali*) over-emphasises the boarders' (mis)conduct such as their love affairs, the way they vanish without paying shop bills and rent for boarding houses etc. throughout the encounter, he also portrays these 'naughty girls' as 'good girls' (and vice versa). As he simply puts it:

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[136] The modality of a sentence is the relationship it sets up between author and representations – what the author (of that sentence) commits himself/herself to in terms of truth (Fairclough 2003: 219).

Lamai are good. [But] *palakayo* [managers, owners] are *upset.*[137] Income goes to the *palakayo* [managers, owners].

Thus, as the reader has already encountered, (doing) the *lamai* identity as narrated by these social actors in the *kalape* is a double-bind (Derrida 1988b). It portrays the workers' as 'good girls' as well as 'naughty girls' as it oscillates from one con-text to another. So the same naughty girls, who commit 'lowly works/acts', become innocent good girls and vice versa, even within a single text. This aporia of (doing) the *lamai* identity as narrated and restored by the boarding house owners and small shop owners in the *kalape* is also, surprisingly, echoed in worker-feminist activists' versions of (doing) the *lamai* identity, more or less, disregarding their critical engagement with the industry, the workers and the *kalape* as a whole.

Worker-feminist activists and un-doing the *lamai*

It is around 5 o'clock, towards the end of a long day during my fieldwork. After my encounter with Priyanthi and her colleagues, followed by the encounters with Siril and his wife and, subsequently, with the shop owner, Thanuja and I go to her office. It is a small house in a rather congested area surrounded mostly by boarding houses. Thanuja invites me to sit down in the living room; a quite large, gloomy room housing a few chairs and tables. A large bookshelf packed with newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets etc. is in one corner of the room. Two volunteers – a young man and a young woman who are apparel factory workers – are doing some work on the office computer. Thanuja's little son is also wandering around and shows great enthusiasm for 'interfering' in the encounter that we are

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[137] The English word used by the shop owner in the original Sinhala encounter. Here it effectively means that the owners of the factories are bad or corrupted people. This usage is not uncommon in colloquial Sinhala.

going to conduct. As Thanuja tells me even this little fellow, whose is about three years old, knows that his mother is going be in *sakachchawak* (a discussion) soon.

After a brief informal chat about Thanuja's family background, her organization and my agenda on the day, we gradually reach our formal discussion. It lasts about 40 minutes. Thanuja is a friendly and confident woman in her thirties. She is married and is a mother to two little children. Thanuja 'formally' joined the worker-feminist collective, which I call the Courage, in the mid 1990s. However, as she narrates, even during her school days she was involved in campaigns for workers' rights, because her mother is one of the founder members of the Courage which was established in the early 1980s. Also her father was a trade union activist. At present, Thanuja is the convenor of the Courage.

As an experienced campaigner for workers' rights in the zone, Thanuja has a deep understanding of and empathy for the workers in the industry and their everyday struggles in the context of the *kalape*. She is highly critical of the *kalape*, particularly the oppression of its female shopfloor workers whom she calls *kamkaru sthreen* (women labourers/workers).[138] Thanuja's critical engagement with the everyday realities of the workers and her resistance to their oppressors are evident throughout the encounter.

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[138] This term has not been used by any other social actors either in ChillCo or HotCo or in the *kalape* such as owners of the boarding houses etc. However, Thanuja extensively uses the terms *kamkaru sthreen* (women labourers), and even *kamkaruwo* (labourers) to refer to the workers during the encounter.

Commoditising female bodies

Thanuja's resistance emerges even more sharply when I refer to one name for the zone as *vesa kalapaye* (zone of whores). Nevertheless this resistance is not straightforward.

> **Dhammika:** Thanuja, is there a trend of calling [the zone] as a *vesa kalapaye* [zone of whores]?
>
> **Thanuja:** There is such [she talks in a low tone]. No words to say.., *Juki keli* [*Juki* pieces], *Juki badu* [*Juki* goods/commodities], *kella* [a piece], *baduwa* [a good/commodity], *gediya* [a fruit/crop]. Even a man who cut grasses thinks [about the workers] in a lowly assessment. When getting onto a bus it is like assigning [the workers] to the conductor with a written mandate. [They are] pushed by touching [their body] one side, pushed by touching [the body] another side. Don't allow [them] to say a word. Shouting for that. They should live by being inferior for every person here [in the *kalape*]. This is not [happening in other sectors]. There are young [female] groups in other private sector[s]. This status is not assigned for them.

As this encounter embodies the *Juki lamai* stigma which not only Priyanthi and her colleagues (female shopfloor workers in HotCo) but Siril and many other social actors in the *kalape* are reluctant to accept is not a dead utterance. It is still part of the workers' everyday reality in the *kalape*, despite the evaporation of the brand/identity *Juki* in official-written texts of the industry in the mid 1980s. So it intermingles with and substitutes for (and is substituted by) many colloquialisms which are (re)constructed and used in the post-liberalized socio-economic con-text to refer to and portray young women (*viz. baduwa* - goods/commodities and *gediya* - a fruit/crop) in general and female shopfloor workers in the industry in the zone in particular (*viz. Juki keli - Juki* pieces and *Juki badu - Juki* goods/commodities). In this process of supplementation, the 'innocent', 'good' girls as well as the 'corrupted', 'naughty' girls equally become, what Pullen and Knights (2007) might

call, lives not worth living or 'worthless bodies' – *keli* (pieces). Ironically they are also in a position to be portrayed as 'commodified objects' – *baduwa* (a good/commodity) or *gediya* (a fruit/crop) – and so as 'objectified subjects' (Spivak 1988b). In the post-liberalized socio-economic context in Sri Lanka, these colloquialisms, particularly *baduwa* (a good/commodity), also connote a 'seductive woman' – *angara dangara sthriya* – mostly a prostitute (see *Great Sinhala Dictionary* 2005: 1212). So the connotation of *baduwa* (a good/commodity) in the con-text of the *kalape* if not *vesa kalape* (zone of whores), portrays the workers as 'whores' – 'quasi' or 'real' (Lynch 2002; 2007; Hewamanne 2003; 2008).

However, dehumanizing and commodifying the workers as *Juki keli* (*Juki* pieces), *Juki badu* (*Juki* commodities/goods) and the like – even by a 'low status' gardener – as this text embodies, is not due to the workers' 'lowly works/acts' as suggested by other social actors in the *kalape*. Nor are these mere epithets which go with or are constructed solely upon the workers' *ganu lamai* (young women or girls) identity in wider Sri Lankan society. Rather the text suggests that they are *unique* to female shopfloor workers who are 'plugged into' the localized global assembly line – its modern technology, *Juki* – in the apparel industry. But it doesn't tell us that whether this doing of the workers' collective identity as *Juki keli* (*Juki* pieces), *Juki badu* (*Juki* commodities/goods) etc. in the con-text of the *kalape* is embedded into their class/occupation as factory women in the industry.

From women labourers to a 'roguish' group's members

Moreover, Thanuja's resistance to this dehumanizing and commodifying process – which (dis)appears as part and parcel of the 'causes' of this aporetic nature of (un-doing) the identity itself – does not tend to restore the workers as *kamkaru sthreen* (women

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labourers/workers) in the industry or 'proletarian women' in the Global South. Nor does it even accept them as a fraction of young working women in Sri Lanka's corporate sector. Rather, as it unfolds, the encounter paradoxically re-invents the 'roguish' group status of the workers which remained unrealized and suppressed at its beginning. But this 'realization' is not as straightforward as it was elsewhere, for example my encounters with the boarding house owners:

> **Dhammika:** What's the reason for calling [the workers as] *lamai*?
>
> **Thanuja:** Called as *lamai*. We attempt to call them as *kamkaru sthreen* [women labourers]. [It] may be a thing that has come when they come to here [the zone]; they are as a one group [*eka kandayamak*] gathered together with that [their] *O-Level* education. Even we don't like to addressing [them in] this [name of] *lamai*. They are one of the major fractions [who] earn foreign currencies to Sri Lanka. So that foreign currencies are the only thing what the Government [is concerned with]. As I think to emerge this type of situation, because the Government have abandoned its responsibility for this [the zone]. Hostel facilities. Transport facilities. Sexual harassment which they had had within the institutes [*ayathana* - factories]. Now [they] have changed a lot. Besides [who] has been brought [here is] a young group. Even there is not a culture. Besides we did not have lives like in Europe.[139] So the good ones live in a good manner. But that love affairs [*ara prema sambandatha*[140]].., there are infidelity [*aniyam*] relationships here [and] there. Most boarding owners *use*[141] them [the workers]. There are lots of such problems.

Thus, unlike in other social actors' versions in the *kalape*, the female shopfloor workers whom we confront in this text are neither the *lamai* nor a roguish group as such. Instead

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[139] It is a widely accepted belief of ordinary men and women in Sri Lanka that Europeans are liberal about their sexual relations or they are morally 'loose'.

[140] This connotes the *anawashya prema sambandatha* (unnecessary love affairs) which Siril has already pointed out (also see footnote 135).

[141] This English word in the original Sinhala text effectively means sexual abuse. This usage is not uncommon in colloquial Sinhala.

they are *kamkaru sthreen* (women labourers) who play a significant role in Sri Lanka's economy. But these same *kamkaru sthreen* (women labourers), as the text unfolds, are reinvented as a particular group – *eka kandayamak* – who migrated from rural villages with a poor educational background. And more crucially the text suggests that this group is indulging in sex – love affairs and infidelity – the same 'lowly works/acts' of the migrant 'naughty girls' as already marked by boarding house owners like Siril as well as in many other social texts (see for example, *Sunday Island* 1991; also Hewamanne 2003; 2008).

Despite its resistance to oppression and oppressors, the text, therefore, erases what it has already traced as *kamkaru sthreen* (women labourers) who struggle with many adverse socio-economic conditions in the *kalap*e. Consequently it suggests that the possibility for these proletarian women, who are actually migrant rural young women, to be either 'good girls' or 'naughty girls' in the *kalape* depends primarily on their own (mis)conduct – love affairs, chastity etc. Indeed it insists that '… the good ones live in a good manner (and vice versa)'. So the text suggests that (un)doing the workers' collective identity as *lamai* is also the way workers' 'own acts', as Butler (1990) might suggest, tend to produce their 'own identity' in the industry. However, this (un)doing process keeps the identity in a double bind – able proletarian women and corrupted naughty girls.

Being and not-being workers

The text, therefore, reminds us that the possibility of effacing the *lamai* identity totally and hence *re*narrating the identity as *kamkaru sthreen* (women labourers/workers) is also its impossibility in the con-text of the *kalape*. As Thanuja puts it, when we reach the role of the trade unions in the zone:

Dhammika: What type of input from the trade unions [in the zone]?

Thanuja: Actually, there is no weight [*barak* – contribution] put by [Sri] Lanka's trade unions on the zone. Anyone, *lamai* don't know what is called that workers' committees [*oya sevaka sabha* - JCC]. [They] don't know what is happening there. [Those who are] appointed [to the committees are] theirs [management's] ones.

Dhammika: Are they [the workers] ready to be educated [about their rights]?

Thanuja: *Kamkaruwo* [labourers, workers]? Never come [to our events] if there are work [in the factories] on Sundays. If there are our *workshops* [and] the like, we have adapted to conduct [the workshops] at night. [The workers] don't have a big appetite. If we have informed 75 [workers], around 50 come [to the workshop].

As this text embodies, the *kamkaru sthreen* (women labourers/workers) whom the reader has already confronted are not proletarian women who are ready to struggle for their own cause. Instead they are *lamai* who are virtually ignorant about what is going on in their environment, even in the rather toothless environment of the JCCs. This deferred presence of the term/identity *lamai*, I argue, in fact shows how the signifier/identity *kamkaru sthreen* (women labourers/workers) is also contaminated by the *lamai* identity. On the other hand, it marks the risk of doing female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* in the context of the *kalape* even by a critical and experienced worker-feminist activist like Thanuja, which is somewhat explicit in the *written* texts of such activists or in the texts published by such activist groups (see for example *Vinischaya Karanu Mena* 1999; Aththanayake 2008). Thus it reiterates how the social actors in the *kalape* are conditioned to use this utterance and hence, by this doing, disregarding their contradictory (and interconnected) roles and their attempts at (un)doing the identity in the *kalape*.

However, this (dis)appearance of the term/identity *lamai*, which emerges as part and parcel of Thanuja's criticism about the (neglected) role of the trade unions in the zone, as the text exhibits, is ephemeral. It is quickly substituted by the term/identity *kamkaruwo* (labourers/workers). But this substitution and indeed this attempt of erasing what the text has already traced – the workers as *lamai* – appears as an unworkable attempt. The text in fact suggests that these *kamkaruwo* (labourers/workers) are not proletarian women who are ready to fight for their own cause, but virtual workaholics, suffering from false consciousness, who are ready to work even on Sundays. The text, its deep interior, indeed creates a striking link between the workers' ignorance, unwillingness to learn etc. and their collective identity as *lamai* in the con-text of the *kalape*.

This resemblance between the workers' 'ignorance' and their *lamai* identity is, however, not an innocent act. Rather, as I encounter during my (dis)engagements with these other actors in the *kalape*, it plays a crucial role in doing and restoring the workers' collective identity as *lamai* in the *kalape* con-text. It is vivid in my encounter with another worker activist in the zone, whom I call Mervin.

In search of proletarian women

It is a Sunday, a rainy day, at around 9.30 in the morning. I am in the last days of my fieldwork in the Katunayake FTZ. I have been waiting for Mervin at the office of his NGO, which I call the Life. He agreed to meet me at 9.00 when I contacted him by phone about two weeks ago. My eyes are moving around this fairly large old house by the seaside in a suburban area of the zone. A few members of the Life are busy with work. Some read Sunday papers from the newspaper rack on the veranda. They seem friendly and kindly

suggest I go and sit in the living room. I hear the roar of the sea. After another couple of minutes, a friendly-looking, busy man enters the house. Mervin quickly recognizes me. After a brief informal chat, Mervin begins his story about the workers and the zone in one of the offices in the house. Subsequently we move to the kitchen and continue our encounter there while drinking hot tea and finally end up in the living room of the house, as Mervin and I had to 'sacrifice' other spatial arrangements for his colleagues from time to time. So the encounter takes more than one and a half hours.

Mervin is in his fifties. He is married with children. He was at one point an active member of one of the radical left wing political parties in Sri Lanka. This activism, as he narrates, pushed him to struggle for workers' rights in the zone from its commencement in the late 1970s. So as part of this long struggle Mervin became a founding member of many worker collectives in the zone, especially those focused on recognition of trade unions in the zone during the 1980s. As a result, police custody and physical assaults by the police as well as by hired thugs of the factory owners etc. were not uncommon in his political life, especially during the 1980s and early 1990s. Further Mervin has also been actively involved in labour tribunals as a legal adviser for workers since the early 1980s.

Begin ignorant – being lamai

Despite this active role, at present Mervin is critical about Sri Lanka's leftist movement and trade unions in general and his political life as a campaigner for workers' rights in particular. This criticism, as I encountered it, is largely induced by his dissatisfaction about the zone workers', particularly female shopfloor workers', reluctance to struggle for their own rights. Indeed, unlike Thanuja, Mervin *explicitly* portrays female shopfloor workers in

the industry as mere salaried workers suffering from false consciousness. Moreover, throughout the encounter he repeatedly utters the term *lamai* to refer to female shopfloor workers and indeed to do their collective identity as *lamai* in the *kalape* context, despite his status as a well-known activist there. But, in contrast to the other social actors' versions, his explanation for the reason why workers become *lamai* in the *kalape* is 'rational' – at least for Mervin – even though it is ironic. As he puts it:

> **Dhammika:** Why do they [the workers] become *lamai* [in the zone]?
>
> **Mervin:** Now if I, why I call *lamai* in most time. Why I call *lamai*, because [their] unawareness.
>
> **Dhammika:** They do not know.
>
> **Mervin:** [They] don't have enthusiasm to know…[142] I do call [them] not from that meaning. I call *lamai* from an angle of not being *little professors*. Actually [they] should have been called a *manda buddhika lamaya* [mentally retarded child] if not a *wadunnathi lamaya* [non-grownup child], if call correctly we should use from [that] angle. That means their social order [*samaja ratawa*] has been formed them to not to learn. To *control* [them]. That means they work until 7 [p.m.]. When they come back [to the boarding houses] after 7, at the boarding house they cook, eat, wash clothes. Thereupon *Sirasa*'s two and half hour's *Praveena*[143] becomes the popular [tele]drama. She doesn't know, defeating Ranil Wickramasinghe Mahinda Rajapaksha has become the Prime Minster.[144] She doesn't know who the Labour Minster is. She doesn't know who Nelson Mandela is. She differs from this world.

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[142] At this point, as a counter argument, I explain Eric Berne's notion of the child ego state and then the notion of a child as a 'little professor' who is eager to learn and explore (see Stewart and Tilney 2000). Mervin follows my counter argument which is the first time he has heard of Berne's ideas.

[143] *Praveena* is a teledrama broadcast by a private TV channel named *Sirasa*. As many social actors in the zone told me the workers are 'addicted' to this melodramatic soap opera. This soap opera as well as the TV channel is highly criticized particularly by left-wing politicians and social reformers. As they argue, the channel in general and the soap opera in particular evade the everyday reality.

[144] Here Mervin refers perhaps to the 2005 Presidential Election in Sri Lanka in which Mahinda Rajapaksha became the President by defeating his opponent Ranil Wickramasinghe. If so it should not be the Prime Minster but the President.

Unlike Thanuja's muted connection between the workers' unwillingness to learn and the *lamai* identity, in this encounter the connection is much more explicit. For Mervin this unwillingness is indeed the reason for the workers becoming and remaining *lamai* in the *kalape* context. This unwillingness to learn if not the 'ignorance' of the workers, and hence their collective identity as *lamai* in the *kalape* con-text, is due to their 'social order' in the *kalape*. So, as the encounter shows, this order or routine is virtually restricted only to a long working day, to domestic chores and to televising watching (Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; *Makena Mathaka* 2007). But this lowly identity, the encounter suggests, is not a temperament or identity that inherently comes with the workers' rural village background. It is, on the contrary, entrenched in their role in the localized global assembly line in the industry which makes them reluctant to learn and hence halts their educational process as adults. In fact it tends to make them separate 'from this world' – its everyday reality – as an alienated group in the surrounding environs of the zone.

The role of trade unions

However, as the encounter unfolds, it emerges that this 'agenda' of the localized global assembly line – which holts the workers educational process and makes them separate from this world – has been deployed through the multiple managerial apparatuses of the industry, chiefly through (un)doing HRM in the industry, which is an unavoidable part of workers' everyday affairs in the factory milieu, as we have seen. This deceptive but crucial role of (un)doing HRM in the industry is exposed when I ask about the role of trade unions in the zone.

> **Mervin:** Now, [it is] like this, Dhammika. If it is taken from the angle of [Sri] Lanka's
> workers [*kamkaruwange*], in the past, in most time, when taken a trade union,

why workers stay in there. Reason for that [is] the bereavement benefits [*maranadara*] and other welfares of that [the trade union]. [The members] do not leave, because to get that [the benefits]… Now, to date, this role is taken to be performed by the owners [*palakayo*]. That's in a very good manner. You imagine, [workers] in Sun Garments[145] when going home [to remote villages] in Sinhala New Year[146] provided a special bus to bring home refrigerators, ovens[147] that they [the workers] have bought. Now, because of people [the workers] do not come back to the work, after the New Year holidays the bus is sent to there [to villages] to bring back. [Otherwise] people do not come back. There are 35,000 vacancies [in the zone].

Thus the welfare role of the trade unions, as this encounter exhibits, is palatably but systematically replaced by the role of management of the factories. So the present dilemma of the trade unions and their not very influential role in the zone are partly due to their inability to cope with the 'new' approach to managing labour in the industry in the zone which emerged, as we have seen, in the early 1990s under the banner of HRM. So the text, on the one hand, suggests that the workers are better off, as they are provided factory transport during the New Year to carry discounted purchases to their village homes. On the other hand, the text, as it unfolds, ruptures its own assertion. So it tells us that there is something 'lacking' in this 'new' approach to managing labour, as there are still 35,000 vacancies in the zone.

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[145] Again I use a pseudonym to protect the identity of this company.
[146] Singhalese and Hindus in Sri Lanka celebrate their traditional new year in mid-April. This is one of the major celebrations in Sri Lanka. Thus during this festival most factories in the zone grant at least five days leave with pay for the workers.
[147] These electrical appliances are still considered as luxuries in the rural villages. As I got to know during my fieldwork in the zone, welfare committees or HR departments in most companies in the zone hold discounted sales of these appliances for the workers on their factory premises.

HRM, the good subject

As the encounter unfolds, Mervin himself attempts to figure out this 'new' way of managing labour which takes the form of the strange creature called HRM. Indeed he finds it difficult to synthesize a link between these 'new' practices – *un*doing HRM, such as providing transport facilities to carry the workers' purchases to their villages etc.[148] – which are uncommon in Sri Lanka's corporate sector and the epistemic community's version of HRM (doing HRM) which he is eager to make out as a 'good subject':

> **Mervin:** *Human Resource* is a good *subject*. But what happens in most institutes [*ayathana* - factories in the zone] *priris kalamanakaruwan* [personnel managers] merely becomes *Human Resource Managers*. No any change of the attitudes. But when taking [a company] like Max Garments,[149] they use advanced methods, that *sports* [activities]*,* their [the workers'] other requirements. By doing all, that [old] method, a new way of control is begun.., *nangi* [younger sister], *malli* [younger brother], *duwa* [daughter].
>
> […]
>
> In our [Sri] Lanka there is a moral bond [among people]. To get to the level that speaks to *ape mahattaya* [our sir], *ape* Dhammika *mahattaya* [our Dhammika sir], *ape supervisor* [our supervisor], *ape sir* [our sir by the workers]… So the trade unions are being defeated. We cannot prove the saying of the labour exploitation, because they [the workers] are ready to be exploited. Ready, because they have a salary. They are ready for the Sunday work. If worked on Sunday [the workers are] paid more. If not, if not worked on Sunday, their *advance, bonus* are cut. Hence she attempts to not to disobey for all that.

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[148] During the encounter Mervin also explains other 'unique' practices such as visiting absent employees' boarding houses which the reader has already witnessed. Interestingly some of the companies he knows even ask their sister companies in rural villages to visit the absent and/or sick employees' homes in those villages on their behalf. Further HR personnel in some of the companies send greeting cards and visit the female workers to events like the birth of a new baby.

[149] Again I use a pseudonym to protect the identity of this company.

This encounter reminds us of the 'symbolic' changes that took place during the early 1990s vis-à-vis managing labour in the industry in the zone. To mark the nature of these symbolic changes, the text utters the English name of the 'caretakers' of this 'new' approach to managing labour – Human Resource Managers – whereas it keeps the original Sinhala name of caretakers of the 'old' version of managing labour – *piris kalamanakaruwan* (personnel managers) – unchanged. This language game is not innocent as it appears. Rather it, I argue, connotes the archaic orthodox nature of *priris kalamanakaruwan* (personnel managers) and indeed of *piris kalamanakaranaya* (personnel management) and, subsequently portrays HRM as modern and contemporary – a 'good subject' as Mervin puts it. So the text implies how activists like Mervin also views, more or less, HRM as emancipatory – as reflected in and produced by the epistemic community's version of HRM.

However, this assertion is itself negated as the text unfolds. So the text then narrates how these 'good changes' reinvent workers as *nangi* (younger sister), *duwa* (daughter) etc. – the residual/relational identities of female shopfloor workers that go with and substitute for (and are substituted by) their *lamai* identity in the industry, as we have seen in the previous chapter (5). So these changes, the text narrates, tend to rupture the antagonism between the workers and the factory owners and indeed between labour and capital. Consequently they create (apparent) harmony between the workers and the managers within which the manager becomes *ape sir* (our sir) which connotes acceptance, affection, intimacy and the like. This entire process, the text tells us, creates trouble for trade unions. It obliterates their reason to exist in the zone, because they are no longer able to 'prove' the 'saying of the labour exploitation'. So the text exhibits how this 'new', 'good' subject, HRM, and its

'new' (oral) language – different signifiers/identities such as *nangi* (younger sister), *duwa* (daughter) etc. which the phenomenon has re-invented and employs within the industry – tend to evade the everyday reality of the workers and so denies 'saying of the labour exploitation'. Paradoxically here the workers, as the text embodies, are 'ready to be exploited'. So like a variety of different threads that are woven together, the text embodies how the workers' ignorance if not false consciousness, their 'social order' in the *kalape* and (un)doing HRM in the industry intermingle and entwine with each other to do and restore the workers' collective identity as *lamai* in the industry and consequently to buttress their very (non)existence in the *kalape* as little ones.

Articulating images

However, as the encounter unfolds, these same 'feeble', 'ignorant' *lamai* who are being trapped by their own 'social order' (and HRM) also become *kamkaru sthreen* (women labourers) and then able young women who are the breadwinners, more or less, for their families. As Mervin narrates, as we reach the workers' socio-family background in our encounter:

> **Mervin:** Then the major problem of *kamkaru sthreen* [women labourers/workers] in the *kalape*, those *kello* [girls] in *hean* [chenas] [150] burning to the sun; under the protection of fathers and mothers without any income; do not come five cent to the hand [they are penniless] come to this *welada kalape* [trade zone]. At the very moment [they] come, on the one hand, [they] find a freedom. Second reason, [they] get an income. Upon that income, at the family, a social status has arisen for them.
>
> **Dhammika:** Does a social status arise, actually?

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[150] Chena is a form of traditional cultivation in Sri Lanka, especially in the dry zone of the country. Here the farmers set fire to a selected area of woods (called *hena* - chena) before cultivating their croups. So here Mervin refers to what the female migrant workers would be doing in their villages.

Mervin: Arising at home. Arising at home. *Duwa* [daughter] who sends something to *appochchi* [father], *ape kalape duwa* [our zone's daughter]. When *kellak* [a girl] comes back from Italy, from the Middle East, she is who controls the family. Not for that extent [to those who come from Italy or the Middle East but] they [zone workers] would have an economic power than previously. [151]

Dhammika: But [what is about] social [image]?

Mervin: No social image. Now factories are attempting to build up that image. I think. Factories have accused us, this image had been built up in this *welada kalape* [trade zone], because when factories coming [to the zone] we accused [them] they are coming to *suddiyange jangi mahanna* [sew white women's underpants].

Thus the previously unemployed young women's entrenchment in the localised global factory floor shows them, as this text narrates, a way to escape from parental control and more importantly from their harsh rural environment (Lynch 2007). So it offers an income, a 'freedom' and also a social space for them, at least in their family milieu. These emancipatory promises of their role as *kamkaru sthreen* (women labourers/workers) in the industry, however, did not create a (decent) social image for them. Rather their socio-economic role was reduced to 'unimportant dirty work' – *suddiyange jangi mahanna* (sewing white women's underpants) [152] – at the very moment they (dis)appeared in the industry. This is Mervin's reference to 'sewing white women's underpants' which led to a moral panic among critics (*Sunday Island* 1991; Lynch 2002; 2007; Hewamanne 2003;

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[151] In addition to shopfloor jobs in the apparel industry housemaid work in the oil rich Middle East is the other major job opportunity that opened up for unemployed women in Sri Lanka in the liberal economy. Young men and young women from Sri Lanka, particularly in the Negombo District where the zone and this NGO – the Life – are located, go to Italy as migrant workers as well.

[152] Before the economic liberalization, women's readymade underpants (*yata kalisam*) were not very common in Sri Lanka. So sewing underpants was largely considered as a 'private business' of 'women folks' even in the 1970s. Further this colloquialism *jangi* in Sri Lankan context does not connote *yata kalisam* (underpants) as such. Rather it also connotes the 'dirty' and 'vulgar' nature. In fact the colloquial phrase *suddiyange jangi mahanna* connotes 'unimportant dirty work'. Moreover, it signifies not only the alienated nature of the work, as *suddi* (white woman) represents a non-native outsider but also connotes 'moral plight' of the work, as the colloquial signifier *suddiyo* (white women) tends to portray 'easy women' or 'morally loose women', more or less, in wider Sri Lankan society (see Lynch 2002; 2007).

2008). The text thus reiterates that the workers' lowly identity is not a temperament or identity which arrives with the migrant women when they come to the industry from their rural family background, even though their background is harsh and hampered by poverty. But neither does it suggest that this lowly social image or identity exists separately from the workers' rural roots as *gode ganu lamai* (rustic girls) as already marked largely by the social actors such as boarding house owners. Instead it tells us how they intermingle and entwine with each other in forming a 'new' identity which is also embodied through the same signifier – *lamai*. Further the text, more shockingly, unveils how even the worker activists in the zone – particularly some left wing political parties – also played a significant role, consciously or inadvertently, in portraying the emerging waged/productive labour role of rural young women in the nascent liberalized economic context as 'unimportant dirty work' (see for example Lynch 2002; 2007).

Moreover, this critical engagement with the workers and their very (non)existence in the *kalape* con-text as *lamai* and more importantly this attempt to synthesise a link between the *lamai* identity and the workers' role in the industry as factory women is not a generalized 'everyday story', even among the worker activists in the zone. Rather, as the reader has already recognized, the workers are always at a risk of being portrayed as a 'roguish' group in the *kalape* and hence their lowly identity as *lamai* is always in a position to appear as an exclusive outcome of their rural family background. Surprisingly this is explicit in my next encounter with a female activist of the Life, who was a shopfloor worker in the industry in the zone. I call her Nilupa.

Dis-engaging from *lamai*

After my encounter with Mervin I went to see Nilupa. Although she had agreed to come to the Life's office she could not in the end make the meeting. So by going here and there on rough village roads, finally one of my relatives – who assisted me by driving on many Sundays during my fieldwork in the zone – and I are able to find her house. This nice looking young woman apologizes to me for her inability to see me at the Life, because she is not well due to being pregnant. Despite my reluctance to interview her as a result, not only Nilupa but also her supportive husband – an employee of the industry in the zone – encourages me to carry on what we have scheduled weeks ago. So after a brief chat about Nilupa's pregnancy, we start our formal discussion in the living room of her house. It lasts around 50 minutes.

Nilupa is in her late twenties. She is from a southern village in Sri Lanka. Nilupa has been educated up to advanced level. Due to her inability to find a 'suitable job', in 2003 she joined one of the leading apparel manufacturing companies in the zone as a quality checker. However, after one and a half years service, she had to leave the company, as she was suspected of being a potential 'trouble maker' by the management.[153] This, as Nilupa narrates, was mainly due to the fact that one of the leading worker-feminist activists in the zone is her close relative. Then Nilupa joined another company in the zone where she worked as a sewing machine operator until she became a 'full timer' at the Life. This industrial exposure and career history makes Nilupa's story about the workers and their

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[153] According to managers in ChillCo and HotCo as well as the history of the industry (see Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997) potential 'trouble makers' are generally male workers. However, Nilupa's story tells me that this stance – feeble women and rebellious men – is not always the case in the industry.

everyday struggle in the *kalape* rich and appealing, although again it is internally contradictory.

Becoming of the lamai

In fact, despite her attempt to narrate her story in a 'professional' manner, as the encounter unfolds, Nilupa often utters the term *lamai* to refer to and portray female shopfloor workers – her former colleagues – particularly when she refers to her factory life. For example, when Nilupa remembers an episode from her factory life when she was at the second company:

> **Nilupa:** Trained [and then] put me onto a *line*. [Managers told me] you stay three months [on the line]. After three months you will be definitely stood up [*nagittanawa*] from here [production line].
>
> **Dhammika:** They call as standing up.
>
> **Nilupa:** On the *line* they call like that.
>
> **Dhammika:** Why [do they] call like that?
>
> **Nilupa:** That's the way *lamai use*. But [it means] being promoted. That's the way the *workers use*. We are stood up [*nagittanawa*].

As this text narrates, the group to which Nilupa actually belonged in the factory milieu were not the *kamkaru sthreen* (women labourers/workers) whom she now confronts as part and parcel of her current role as an activist of the Life. Rather they were *lamai* who are 'plugged into' the localised global factory floor in the industry and whom we have already encountered in the factory milieu as well as the *kalape*. This (un)doing of the workers' collective identity as *lamai* is, however, always disturbed by Nilupa's current role in the Life. As a result, as the encounter unfolds, this same *lamai* unexpectedly become the 'workers'. But this supplement and so this appropriation does not lead to a total effacement

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of female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai*. Nor does this becoming of the *lamai* identity suggest that they are 'workers' who are conscious about their everyday reality in the zone. Rather what the signifier 'worker' signifies in this con-text is not the 'ideal worker' – *kamkaru sthriya* (woman labourer) as in the activists' everyday jargon, who readily struggle for their own cause – or the 'ideal employee' in textual HRM in the industry. Indeed as Nilupa narrates when I ask about the workers' awareness of portraits of the zone as *prema kalapaye* (zone of love) and *vesa kalapaye* (zone of whores):

> **Dhammika:** Are they *conscious* about this [*prema kalapaye* and *vesa kalapaye*]?
> **Nilupa:** The *workers*?
> **Dhammika:** Yes, the workers, are they *conscious*?
> **Nilupa:** They don't have a dialogue. They don't think again or not involved in [discussions]. There is no such.
> **Dhammika:** Their actual conversations go with what?
> **Nilupa:** Actual conversations. If taken actual conversations [they] go with [focus on] salary, the *target,* like these. That's the way. Due to the monotonous [nature] of their job they do not have any relationship with any outside thing.

Thus Nilupa's reinvention of her former colleagues as 'workers' and indeed her attempt to *un*do their *lamai* identity – which Nilupa herself was at one time part of – does not lead to repositioning them as workers as such. Rather they remain as immature beings as already portrayed by many social actors in the *kalape*, indeed by Mervin as well as Thanuja. Nevertheless the text suggests that this immaturity if not ignorance is not an inevitable or inheritance of female factory workers in the industry, but maybe a 'thing' that goes with or perhaps is due to the monotonous nature of their factory life (Devanarayana 1997; *Makena Mathaka* 2007).

Roots of the workers

This sudden resemblance between the 'little ones' temperament of the workers and their occupation in the industry is, however, ephemeral. It is erased at the very moment it is traced. In fact, as the encounter unfolds, the workers' rural village roots are rediscovered and subsequently their rural village identity as *gode ganu lamai* (rustic girls) is substituted for the (apparently) decent worker image, despite their false consciousness. As Nilupa narrates:

> **Nilupa:** Those who come to here [the zone] are the people live in villages [*gamwala*]. [They are] nurtured within [their] homes. [They] do not have social experiences.
>
> **Dhammika:** Especially *ganu lamai* (girls).
>
> **Nilupa:** *Ganu lamai.* When they come to here [and] start to *plug* [into the zone environs]… Especially when Katunayake is taken [into consideration] they [the workers] began to tangle with lots of problems due to a lack of social experience of them. What I say, now it is very little [amount of problems]. At the beginning of the time when we came here and before that [there were incidents of workers] either jump in front of the train or drink poison or set [themselves on] fire. There were many problems like these. That means, [they] came to here from the village, under the parents' protection in their homes…

The workers if not *ganu lamai* (young women or girls) whom we confront in this text are not very different from the group members we have encountered elsewhere in the *kalape* or in the cinematic texts – immature, inexperienced etc. Therefore, they – their identity – remain as *game ganu lamai* (village girls) who have become lost in the 'notorious' Katunayake FTZ due to their inexperience. This strange city and the urban life, the text narrates, makes their socio-physical survival in the context of the *kalape* virtually impossible. As a result, some of them, unfortunately, end their own lives (see Devanarayana 1997; Attanapola 2005; *Makena Mathaka* 2007).

The image of garment lamai

This vicious (non)existence in the context of the *kalape*, therefore, never facilitates them to continue as their *asarana, ahinsaka game ganu lamai* (helpless, innocent village girls) identity in wider Sri Lankan society as already marked by many social actors such as politicians, managers and so on. Rather after arriving in the *kalape* this same innocent *lamai* re-emerge or are re-depicted with a 'new' image which signifies a lowly identity. As Nilupa puts it:

> **Dhammika:** Why has been called as *lamai*?
>
> **Nilupa:** I don't know how it has been originated. Even when I came [to the zone] this is which is used.
>
> **Dhammika:** Saying *lamai*?
>
> **Nilupa:** Saying *lamai*.
>
> **Dhammika:** Now, is it called as *Juki lamai*?
>
> **Nilupa:** Saying *Juki lamai* may be used by outsiders, but not used inside [the factory].
>
> **Dhammika:** Have you heard saying *Juki lamai*? Now, it [saying *Juki lamai*] has been reported, this saying *Juki*.
>
> **Nilupa:** No, I haven't heard. It is called as *garment lamai*. I haven't heard saying *Juki lamai*. But it had been used in the past, I have heard that. Nevertheless, now it is used the saying *garment lamai*.
>
> **Dhammika:** With that term, does it send a message, as you feel?
>
> **Nilupa:** What [is] meant by a message? Yes, it tells something like their *image*.
>
> **Dhammika:** What type of *image*?
>
> **Nilupa:** Indicates something like they are not respected [when] people here [in the *kalape*] say *garment lamai*. That means a weakness of them comes out from it [the *lamai* identity].

This text reminds us again of how this relatively honoured, innocent term/identity *lamai* in wider Sri Lankan society portrays a lowly identity of the workers when it appears or is uttered in the industry. Indeed it narrates the way in which the identity of *garment/Juki*

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lamai emerged at the moment this same (signifier) *lamai* (dis)appeared in the industry by suppressing the migrant young women's *ahinsaka game lamai* (innocent rural girls) identity in the wider Sri Lankan society. This same signifier/identity thus does not guarantee a fixed identical meaning but signifies a contextual or relational meaning as it oscillates from one con-text to another, as some researcher suggest (Colebrook and McHoul 1996; Jenkins 2000). Nevertheless the signifier *lamai* itself remains undisturbed and unchanged.

Image and job retention

However, this newly articulated image if not identity is not the identity that the workers are ready to embrace. It is, on the contrary, what the workers want to hide and wish to escape from. Indeed, as the encounter unfolds, it emerges as a prime determinant of the workers' (non)existence in the industry. As Nilupa puts it, when I ask about the decision she took to join the Life as a full-timer – which is a financially unfavourable decision, as she tells me, when compared with the income she had earned as a shopfloor worker in the industry:

> **Dhammika:** If I suggest you that you left that [the factory], due to the problem of the *image*?
>
> **Nilupa:** Yes had an impact. Actually *image* had an impact. For me, it has been continuously [impacting]. Why? Our *aiya* [elder brother] worked in Pal Bank.[154] I was in the *garment field*. Our *nangi* [younger sister] was in *campus*…I had a respect within the institute [*ayathanaye* - factory]. But outside [of the factory], since [I] have to say [I am a] *garment* [worker]. Actually the *image* had an enormous impact.
>
> **Dhammika:** Nilupa, [do you] think that [image] affect to stay and not to stay in this job?

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[154] Again I use a pseudonym to protect the identity of this bank.

Nilupa: What affect to stay are economic problems. According to experiences I have had the majority who actually there [in the industry] are *antha asarana* [extremely helpless] *lamai*. The image affects to not to stay, the image affects to not to stay [in the industry]. Not only the image, [but also] the pressure in there [the industry]. Actually, the *workers* work under a huge pressure.

This text recounts to us the female shopfloor workers' 'inability' to construct an equivalent social image if not identity with other middle income earners like bank employees and even with members of same age and sex groups like female students in the Sri Lankan university system. The text indeed reminds us of how demographic characteristics such as income become insignificant when doing the *lamai* identity in the industry. Ironically it also shows the fragile nature of the boarding house owners like Siril's equalization of the garment *lamai/kello* and the campus *lamai/kello*, because the text embodies the alienation of female shopfloor workers like Nilupa as a *garment lamaya/kella* in wider Sri Lankan society as compared to her own sister who is a *campus lamaya/kella*.

Thus once again the text reiterates that what the term *lamai* connotes in the con-text of the *kalape* is not its relatively honoured meaning(s) as it is in wider Sri Lankan society. Instead it signifies a lowly meaning and indeed portrays the lowly identity of the workers which creates tremendous social pressure to leave the industry. This departure from the industry, as the text embodies, may ensure an effacement of the *lamai* identity – something the reader has already come to realize, for example, in *Kinihiriya Mal* where Sanduni became *nona* (madam) whereas her friend, Renuka, remains as *lamaya*.

Despite this revelation, the text tells us that there are people who are still not ready to leave the industry as their economic circumstances keep them in the job itself since they are *antha asarana* (extremely helpless) *lamai*. Indeed the deep interior of the text suggests that those who remain in the industry are neither the workers as such nor the *kamkaru sthreen* (women labourers/workers), but helpless *lamai* whose "Life itself appears only as a *means to life*", as Marx (1959: 75; original emphasis) suggests to us. Ironically this 'revelation' is erased at the every moment it is traced. And subsequently it is supplemented by the 'decent' (English) term/identity 'worker' when Nilupa utters that 'Actually, the *workers* work under a huge pressure'.

The hollow nature of the signifier lamai

This dangerous supplement and indeed this *un*doing of the *lamai* identity, however, does not lead to a total effacement of (doing) the *lamai* identity. As such, even after the substitution, 'the emptiness' of the signifier, as Barthes (2000) suggests, remains unfilled:

> **Dhammika:** Shall I ask a mere question? Does the term *worker* effortlessly come out to you? [Is] it used purposefully? Is the term coming out effortlessly *lamai* [or] *worker*?
>
> **Nilupa:** Normally, for anyone the term *lamai* is used. It is normally.
>
> **Dhammika:** Why, now I recognize, you get the term *worker* by breaking, stopping [the conversation].
>
> **Nilupa:** Yes, the saying *worker*, I have started to *use* a little when I came to this *job* [at the Life].
>
> **Dhammika:** After came to the Life.
>
> **Nilupa:** If not the saying *lamai* is used. That is a normal thing. There is a huge objection for that [this usage]. But that is [still] used as a normal thing.

Unlike Mervin and particularly Thanuja – who use the term *kamkaru sthreen* (women labourers) – this relatively young activist, throughout the encounter, often utters the English term 'worker/s' to refer to female shopfloor workers and to erase the *lamai* identity which she unintentionally traces as the encounter (in Sinhala) unfolds. However, this 'effortful' utterance and hence this obliteration does not generate a significant impact to undo the workers' collective identity as *lamai* in the con-text of the *kalape*. Rather the term *lamai* and indeed (doing) the *lamai* identity remains undisrupted as a 'normal(ized) thing' in the con-text of the *kalape*, notwithstanding considerable objections to it (see for example Samaraweera 2006). Therefore, like terms such as 'team member', 'human resource' etc. in textual HRM, the signifier 'worker' in this text, I argue, appears as a subtle means that guarantees the (apparent) 'ethico-professional' nature/texture of the text itself. On the other hand, it keeps the reader who faces the text and hence (doing) the *lamai* identity in a quandary as s/he is puzzled by this momentary appearing and disappearing of 'worker' and '*lamai*'. So it always tends to rupture the reader's realization of the 'truth' of (doing) the *lamai* identity in the con-text of the *kalape* and so the childrenization of female labour in Sri Lanka's apparel industry.

Thus undoing the *lamai* identity and so renarrating (doing) the female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *kamkaru sthreen* (women labourers/workers) or as 'worker/s' – a rather 'cosmetic' replacement (in English) for *kamkaru sthreen* – by the worker-feminist activists in the *kalape* appears as an insubstantial, unfinished effort. Or it is a transient or fragile obliteration of (doing) the *lamai* identity. This impossibility, this aporia of *un*doing the *lamai* identity in the industry in the con-text of the *kalape*, however, does not mean that

undoing of the identity is impossible. Instead this aporia makes the undoing possible. Therefore, the impossibility of undoing the *lamai* identity is also its possibility.

Un-Doing *Lamai*: The Possibility of the Impossibility

As we have already come to realize, female shopfloor workers are quite eager to utter the term *lamai* to refer to and represent themselves. Nevertheless they also choose to deny it, as we encountered at ChillCo for example, when they are questioned about this utterance. This (un)doing of the *lamai* identity by the workers is not limited to their everyday utterances in the factory milieu, at the boarding houses etc. Interestingly it is noticeable even in written texts which are woven and interwoven by the workers. These texts which are mostly in the forms of poems, *nisandas* (free verse), life stories, personal anecdotes and the like use and deploy colloquialisms such as *lamai*, *ganu lamai, kella/kello* (girl/s), *neganiya* (younger sister) etc. to represent the workers and to (re)narrate their collective identity in the industry (e.g. Perera 1994; Ranawaka 1999; *Vinischaya Karanu Mena* 1999; Pallawalage 2007). But 'formal' signifiers – residual/relational identities – such as *yuwathiyan* (women); *soyuriyan* (female colleagues) *sewikawa* (female worker) *machine operator* or *operatorwariya* (female operator) and the like are also simultaneously used to portray female shopfloor workers in the industry (e.g. Ranawaka 1999; *Vinischaya Karanu Mena* 1999; Priyangani 2007b). Further some glorified signifiers/identities like *diriya diyaniay* (courageous daughter), *diriya landa* (courageous woman), *diriya katha* (courageous woman) etc. are likewise part of (un)doing the workers' collective identity in the industry by the workers themselves (e.g. Nilanthi 2007; Priyangi 2007a). These signifiers, as the nexus of the texts of the industry exemplifies, substitute for (and are substituted by) the *lamai* identity as this signifier/identity oscillates from one context to

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another context and, notably, often within a sole text itself, as it unfolds (e.g. Ranawaka 1999; *Vinischaya Karanu Mena* 1999).

However, the workers' 'voices' in these social texts – mostly interwoven and published by worker-feminist collectives in the *kalape* (e.g. *Dabindu* Collective) – characteristically differ from the way they are represented in the written texts which are woven by the 'workers themselves' in the factory milieu. The former are more vociferous and are eager to 'uncover' the workers' very (non)existence in the industry, to portray their everyday struggles and, more importantly, to mark their resistance to their oppressions and oppressors in the industry. The latter are largely limited either to 'everyday themes' such as love, regret about broken love affairs, homage to parents, homesickness etc. – as explicit in texts by women readers in Sri Lankan women's newspapers and periodicals [155] – or, ironically, to glorify the factory itself as in the wall-newspapers (*biththi puwathpath*) in HotCo as well as ChillCo's canteen premises and in ChillCo's monthly internal tabloid, for example.

Dissident voices of un-doing *lamai*

To portray the workers' very (non)existence in the industry and, more importantly, to mark their resistance to their oppressors and oppression, these social texts interwoven and published by the worker-feminist collectives in the *kalape*, intentionally or otherwise, not only use the formal and/or glorified terms – residual/relational identities – such as *kamkaru sthriya* (woman labourer), *sewikawa* (female worker), *diriya katha* (courageous woman)

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[155] There are a number of Sri Lankan periodicals, mostly newspapers (e.g. *Tharuni* - young woman; *Sirikatha* - blessed woman; *Nawaliya* - modern woman; *Birinda* - wife) which are aimed at women.

and so on. In this process they paradoxically also employ terms such as *lamai*, *kella/kello* (girl/s) etc. (e.g. Perera 1994; Ranawaka 1999).

Vagabond wishes

This is exemplified in a poem entitled *Padada Pathuma* (Vagabond Wishes) in *Dabindu*, in the early 1990s – during the aftermath of the second youth insurrection in Sri Lanka (see footnote 29; also Gunaratna 1990; Moore 1993) and the period in which President Premadasa attempted to implement his '200 Garment Factory Programme' to 'eradicate' poverty in the rural villages in Sri Lanka and as a 'solution' to potential future insurrection of village youth (*Daily News* 1992c; Lynch 2007):

> *Garment kellanta* [for girls]
> Army *kollanta* [for boys]
> Heavenly comfort for us…
>
> Say the multinationals
> Together with *deshapaluwan* [those-who-lay-waste-to-the-country][156]
>
> Source: A.C. Perera, *Padada Pathuma* [Vagabond Wishes] 1994, *Dabindu,*
> June, Vol. 10, No. 15, p. 5.

Despite the terms' colloquial nature and more importantly lowly meaning/identity in the industry, particularly in the context of the *kalape*, this text narrates the workers – their collective identity – as *kello* and thus *kellanta* (for girls). This nevertheless does not do the workers' collective identity as young (village) women – *kello* – as such or as *Juki kello*

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[156] The English translation is adapted from Perera (2008: 14).

(*Juki* girls), as we have already confronted in many different texts in the context of the *kalape*. Rather this same signifier, in this (con)text, marks the workers' resistance to the way in which they – *game kello* (village girls) – are restricted to shopfloor jobs in the localised global assembly line as a mere apparatus. This marker, more decisively, also encompasses their counterparts – young (village) men – *kollo*. Indeed it marks the absurd nature of the country's 'ethnic war' or 'war on terror' within which *kollo* – boys, predominantly unemployed Sinhala village boys – become 'salaried victims' as soldiers, as they don't have other options than to join the army.

However, the text does not suggest that these co-incidents – the development of garment industry and the war – are mere 'local(ized) phenomena'. Rather it exposes their deceptive global affiliation. Indeed the text employs the term 'multinationals' – *bahujathika samagam* – to signify the foreign investors in the industry in the zone, the real owners of the apparel manufacturing factories. Subsequently it articulates the way in which they gather together and entwine, with their local partners – the *deshapaluwan* which literally means 'those-who-lay-waste-to-the-country', but metaphorically *deshapalkayan*, (corrupted) politicians. Indeed the text narrates how these global and local forces interchangeably entwine to keep these vicious phenomena, the garment industry and the war, alive as they are equally beneficial for them – providing 'heavenly comfort' – similar to what Spivak suggests, that "Nation-state politics combined with multinational economies produce war" (1998: 225). Thus the workers if not *kello* (girls) whom we confront in this text are not feeble young women suffering from false consciousness, but proletarian women in the Global South who are conscious about their own cause (see Perera 2008).

Dis-engaging from the *Juki's* world

The workers' attempt to (re)narrate their 'unrealized' voices in the industry through these texts and textual means also go beyond rather 'innocent' generalized signifiers such as *lamai* and *kello*, which are always in a position to bring back and portray the workers' *ganu lamai* identity in wider Sri Lankan society. The workers' textual engagement or aesthetic practices in the *kalape* con-text, on the other hand, tell us of their bravery in employing the signifiers *Juki*, *Juki machine* etc. to portray their very (non)existence in the industry in the zone. Indeed this use of these signifiers marks their resistance to their oppression and oppressors, disregarding the risk of doing their collective identity as *Juki kello/lamai* themselves (e.g. Ranawaka 1999; Priyangani 2007b; Senanayaka 2007; Jayarathne 2008).

The Juki's world

As narrated in the poem entitled *Juki Lokaya* (the Juki's World) woven by a female shopfloor worker, for example:

> Sixty, seventy per hour, the *target* of *Juki machine*[157]
> My hands are in a big struggle, as [they] think [how to attain the target]
> Day's *O.T.* knows the reduction when cut one, two hours
> Cartwheel of the life is going to reverse
>
> Until nine, ten o'clock, operating the *machine,* tiredly
> Don't cry *operator*, [you] have to work
> Though the *Boss* yells, wandering around time-to-time
> Does the sleeping dog in the factory wake up for [this] thundering sound [?]
>
> A big mess in *Cutting* [section that] supplies work to [production] *line*
> So threads [of garment] are cut, forcing *lamai* in *Quality* [section]

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[157] Italicized terms are in the original Sinhala text.

The Bosses' shouts, like a thunder happens closely

Polythene [of packing] chatters, mixing [this sound] to *packing*

Enters *garment* [industry], embracing poverty

At the [factory] gate, *ganu lamai* [girls] are cramming

Don't enter this world knowingly

Go away from people who don't know human quality

To get salary, when cramming at office door

Roars of *ties* and *coats* there are not lack

Run by current [determination], like this long journey

Think *Juki machine*, we too are human being in this world

The Boss takes the [attendance] *card,* if go home for four days

So, creeping into the *office* with tears in eyes

Getting it back not easy as going home [to village]

So, you only have the four Gods' protection[158]

Gana Ranawaka, 1999 [August 1988].

Source: *Vinischaya Karanu Mena*, *Dabindu* Collective, Ja-Ela, p. 25.

This contextual text narrates the everyday reality of a factory woman – a sewing machine

operator – in the industry in the Katunayake FTZ. It distinguishes the narrator, her identity,

from her bosses – the middle-class, white-collar men in the industry. Indeed it marks her

class affiliation as a proletarian woman, and signals her roots in a village and in fact her

identity as a 'village girl' and migrant worker. For this and particularly to portray the

estranged labour of factory women and the multiple subordinating forces and processes in

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[158] In Sri Lanka many people traditionally believe the power of four Gods named *Visnu*, *Natha*, *Saman* and *Katharagama* (*Skanda*). They are known as the Four Gods – *sathara waram deviyo* (see Obesekara 1984). Here the narrator refers to the protection of these four Gods.

the factory milieu (Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; *Makena Mathaka* 2007; Samanmali 2007) the text employs many metaphors, ironies etc. For example, the text alters and employs a popular Sinhala saying in Sri Lankan society – *kamhale ballata hena gahuwata ahenne ne* (the dog in the blacksmith's workshop does not hear the thunder) – to (re)narrate how the workers are used to and are conditioned by their boss's shouting and the everyday 'blame game' on the factory floor. And the 'roars of ties and coats' metaphorize the middle-class, white-collar employees in administration and their arbitrary power over female shopfloor workers in the factory milieu.

To portray the narrator's very (non)existence in the industry as a female shopfloor worker, and indeed to undo her collective identity as *lamai* in the industry, the text not only utters colloquialisms such as *lamai* and *ganu lamai.* Paradoxically it also employs the term/signifier *Juki machine* and indeed the brand/identity *Juki* notwithstanding the risks of bringing back the workers' deferred derogated collective identity in the con-text of the *kalape* as *Juki kello* (*Juki* girls) if not *Juki keli* (*Juki* pieces) (*Sunday Island* 1991; Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; Lynch 2002; 2007; Hewamanne 2003; 2008). In fact the reader who faces the text recognizes that the metaphor '*Juki* machine' – when it utters its target: 'Sixty, seventy per hour, the *target of Juki machine*' – signifies not the machine *per se,* but the worker who operates if not is 'plugged into' the machine. Indeed, as the text unfolds, the signifier *Juki* subtly substitutes for an 'unnamed' worker – '(who is) operating the *machine*, tiredly' – which is subsequently substituted by the 'formal' term/signifier *operator.* So the brand/signifier *Juki,* on the one hand, signifies the estranged and dehumanized female shopfloor labour in the industry. On the other, it tends to mark – when the text utters 'Think *Juki machine,* we too are human being in this world' – the workers'

(unrealized) struggle to escape from their alienated labour and lives in the factory milieu and indeed from the *Juki* machine if not (*Juki*) identity itself, by not leaving the industry but constantly struggling with it.

Despite the conscious struggle of the workers, the text, during this process of supplementation, recounts to the reader that the *operator*, her collective identity in the industry, is really *lamai* when it utters 'forcing *lamai* in *Quality* (section)'. This collective identity of female shopfloor workers or labour in the industry, which the text embodies, is again not entirely a 'new' identity. Rather it is crafted upon the workers' already known *ganu lamai* identity in wider Sri Lankan society which *duppath game ganu lamai* (poor village girls) have brought to the factory floor when they arrive in the industry from their rural villages, as the social actors in the *kalape* like Siril have already narrated. The text, however, suggests that this 'inflow' is an ongoing process, because the *ganu lamai* who embrace poverty are still waiting at the factory gate to enter the '*Juki's* World'. Therefore it reminds us of the interplay between the workers' collective identity as *ganu lamai* if not *duppath game ganu lamai* (poor village girls) in wider Sri Lankan society and their occupational/class identity as factory women in the industry.

In this context I argue that this *un*doing, as marked in and by this text, is also in a position to do and restore the workers not only as *kamkaru sthreen* (women labourers/workers) in the industry or if not as proletarian women in the Global South who are ready to struggle for their own cause. But it is also in a position to portray them as feeble *lamai* and members of a 'roguish group' in the *kalape*. Indeed the text reiterates the double-bind of this '*un*doing' – its aporia – and in fact, the becoming of the *lamai* identity itself, which is

always awaiting the next supplement; its deferred (derogated) presence in the industry, particularly in the *kalape*.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I articulate the role of the social actors in the surrounding environs of the Katunayake FTZ which I call the *kalape* vis-à-vis (un)doing female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* in the industry. So the chapter describes and exemplifies the ways in which the workers' collective identity is variously portrayed and narrated by these social actors such as the Matron in HotCo's girls' hostel, boarding house owners, worker-feminist activists etc. in the con-text of the *kalape*. It shows how the boarding house and the small shop owners portray the workers/boarders mostly as 'naughty girls' who commit 'lowly works/acts' (*pahath weda*) in the *kalape*. This naughty girls identity of the workers, the chapter tells us, appears as part and parcel of these actors' desire to mould the workers as 'good girls' in Sri Lanka's modernity as well as members of a 'roguish group' who live in the *kalape*.

However, this doing of the workers' identity, as the chapter embodies, is always in process. Thus these actors' assertions about their boarders/workers as a 'roguish group' and hence doing their identity as 'naughty girls' are always erased at the very moment they have been traced, and vice versa. The chapter then exemplifies how this quandary and indeed the becoming of the workers' collective identity as *lamai* in the *kalape* is also explicit even in the worker-feminist activists' stories about the workers – *kamkaru sthreen* (women labourers/workers) – despite these activists' critical (dis)engagement with the industry as well as with the workers. But here the chapter shows how the activists appear as

antagonists to the industry and (doing) the identity whereas other social actors such as the owners of boarding houses and small shop owners emerge as advocates of (doing) the *lamai* identity – through the texts that they weave and interweave in the *kalape*. However, the chapter also tells us, this does not mean that these actors' versions of (un)doing the *lamai* identity in the *kalape* always remain antagonistic to each other. Rather, like the actors themselves, the texts that they weave and interweave also overlap, intermingle and entwine with each other and so (dis)appear as part and parcel of the nexus of the texts.

In this context the chapter, finally, dissects and reads the workers' 'self-crated texts'. It shows how the workers are eager to use and utter colloquialisms such as *lamai*, *kello* (girls) etc. and even *Juki* not only to portray their very (non)existence in the industry but also, more importantly, to mark their resistance to their oppression and oppressors in the industry. Here it dissects how this same signifier *lamai* – along with other residual/relational signifiers/identities – marks the workers' resistance to doing their identity as *lamai* and, consequently, tends to *un*do their very (non)existence in the industry as *lamai* while at the same time signifying, doing and restoring the *lamai* identity itself.

Therefore, as concluding remarks, I argue that these 'dissident aesthetic practices' of the workers and so this 'undoing' are always in a position to do, narrate and to restore the workers' lowly collective identity as *lamai* in the industry. And thus it is always in a position to bring back its deferred derogated presence in the *kalape* as *Juki lamai* if not *Juki keli* (*Juki* pieces). Nevertheless I do not conclude that this aporia of undoing the *lamai* identity makes renarrating the identity impossible. Instead the impossibility of renarrating the *lamai* identity, the chapter suggests to us, is also its possibility even when the signifier

lamai is uttered and remains unchanged, despite its embedded risk of restoring the *lamai* identity in the con-text of Sri Lanka's apparel industry. With this reflection of (un)doing the *lamai* identity in the con-text of the *kalape* now we move to synthesize and conclude the pleasure and displeasure of this renarrating journey.

Synthesis and Conclusion

The end as the beginning …

Introduction

In this thesis I have embarked on a reading journey to explore, dissect and to renarrate the formation and construction of female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* in Sri Lanka's apparel industry, and what role HRM, mainly its language(s), plays in this process. For this purpose, inspired by poststructuralist discourse analysis (PDA), I read a variety of different texts that are embodied and embedded in (doing) the *lamai* identity in the apparel industry. As the joinery has reached its end, here I discuss the overall conclusions of the thesis I have arrived at.

First, to sum up the journey, I recapitulate the thesis as a whole and its different phases in particular. Second, adhering to the research questions and reflecting on the different phases of the thesis I discuss the overall conclusions I have arrived at. Here I also critically reflect upon the existing literature about the phenomena which I deal with in the thesis. Then I explain the limitations of the thesis. Finally I outline some suggestions for further research.

Renarrating (Un)Doing *Lamai*: A Précis

Sri Lanka's export-oriented apparel industry (re)emerged in the country's nascent liberalized economic context and thus in its newly created Katunayake FTZ in the late 1970s. Subsequently the industry became the country's major export income generator (Kelegama and Foley 1999; Kelegama and Epaarachchi 2002; Kelegama 2005; *Central*

Bank of Sri Lanka Annual Report 2008). It absorbed the majority of traditionally unemployed women, mainly young women from rural areas of the country, as the key apparatus of its labour-intensive factory floor (Jayaweera and Sanmugam 1999; Jayaweera 2000; 2002; de Silva 2002; Hewamanne 2008).

Despite the feminization of this localized global factory floor, the migrant young women who became shopfloor workers emerged as *lamai* at the very moment they (dis)appeared in the industry. This doing of the workers' collective identity as *lamai* is vivid even in the present day industry, even when the established apparatuses of managing labour of the industry were substituted by trendy, fashionable HRM in the 1990s. Indeed the *lamai* identity (dis)appears, is uttered and done in the work milieu as well as the wider social milieus and so (dis)appears in a variety of different texts which are woven and interwoven by many different actors in the industry and wider Sri Lankan society alike. Thus this research set out to unpick a 'puzzle': why these adult 'factory women' are called *lamai* – despite their 'glorified' wage labour role in the industry – and what role HRM, mainly its language(s) or texts, plays in this process, notwithstanding its 'gender neutral' disposition.

The pleasure of (un)doing *lamai* and of (un)doing HRM

As the relevant literature suggests HRM emerged as a palatable supplement for managing labour under the banner of personnel management in work organizations as part and parcel of the 1980s' socio-economic reality in the West (Guest 1990; Hendry and Pettigrew 1990; Keenoy 1990; Legge 1991; 2005; Lundy 1994). Despite the hype of the emergence of this new signifier of managing labour, many critical researchers have problematized its newness and hence what HRM offers as an 'alternative' to personnel management. They dissect the

concept *of* and concepts *in* HRM and instead claim its plurivocality and becoming in work organizations – as opposed to 'good', fixed HRM in market managerialist and normative models of the phenomenon (e.g. Legge 1991; 1999a; 2005; Storey 1991; Keenoy and Anthony 1992; Noon 1992; Townley 1993a; 1993b; 1995; 1998; Keenoy 1997; 1999; Steyaert and Janssens 1999; Harley and Hardy 2004; Watson 2004; Janssens and Steyaert 2009). Also some of them, notably, problematize its 'gender neutral' disposition. They suggest that what HRM really offers to women in work organizations is always under the strain of or an inextricable part of its 'agenda of gender' (e.g. Steele 1992; Woodall 1996; Dickens 1998; Healy 1999; Coates 2004). Nevertheless these researchers, as do many others, narrow down this agenda of gender, more or less, to the so-called rhetoric and reality of HRM within which linguistic categories if not the language(s) of HRM are treated as rhetorics – the antagonistic other of the realities of HRM (e.g. Keenoy 1990; 1997; Legge 1995; 2005; Dickens 1998).

But, despite this emphasis on the rhetoric–reality dualism – as an analytical means to explore the 'realities' of HRM – some researchers argue that the rhetoric of HRM is not something antagonistic to its reality but inextricable part of it (e.g. Kamoche 1995; Watson 1995a; 1995b; also Janssens and Steyaert 2009). Nevertheless this argument, like the language(s) of HRM, still remains mostly unnoticed and underdeveloped even in the critical scholarly tradition of HRM. As a result the implications of the language of HRM in work organizations and its role in the formation and construction of employee identities remain largely under-researched.

Despite this lacuna many researches show how identities in general and gender identities in particular are being constructed, formed and done in the work milieu (Collinson 1988; 1992; Ely 1995; Brewis et al. 1997; Alvesson 1998; Wicks 2002; Adib and Guerrier 2003; Hall et al. 2007; Jeanes 2007; Pullen and Knights 2007; Schilt and Connell 2007; Frenkel 2008; Holvino 2008; Clarke et al. 2009). They claim the fluid and shifting nature of gender identities, the becoming of gender, at work. In this ongoing discussion on articulating identities at work some researchers, by going further, insist on the irreducibility of gender identities in non-western societies to the western notion of the Self which appears as the centre of many such discussions (Kondo 1990a; 1995b; Adib and Guerrier 2003; Frenkel 2008; Holvino 2008). Even with these commendable attempts academic literature on the formation of female shopfloor workers' identities, particularly in non-western work contexts, and the role of HRM, mainly of its language, in the formation of gender identities at work is virtually nonexistent. This is despite the fact that many researchers lay emphasis on the crucial role of language in the formation and construction of identities in general and gender identities in particular (Weedon 1987; Butler 1990; Kondo 1990a; Norton 1997; Hughes 2002; Rees and Garnsey 2003; Brickell 2006; Ybema et al. 2009).

In this context I embarked on a reading journey to explore and dissect and indeed to *re*narrate doing female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* in the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry, and what role HRM, mainly its language(s), plays in this process. I generated and gathered data – oral and written texts that are embodied and embedded in (doing) the *lamai* identity – in multiple research settings in Sri Lanka's apparel industry, mainly in two apparel manufacturing companies, ChillCo and HotCo. As (doing) the *lamai* identity is a discursively articulated identity and so is embodied and embedded in a variety

of different texts I 'crafted' and employed (a version of) PDA – not as opposed to other relational/residual approaches to discourse analysis but with a critique of them – as the most appropriate if not palatable analytical means to *re*narrate (doing) the *lamai* identity. So in this reading or renarrating journey I offered a supplementary-critical reading of the texts that are embodied and embedded in (doing) the *lamai* identity in Sri Lanka's apparel industry by bracketing the heterogeneous nature of the texts for a moment. Taking together the reader's pleasure and displeasure, the different social actors whom the reader confronted, the multiple stories and voices that s/he heard, listened to and even ignored, and the ethico-political dilemmas that the reader had to face during this renarrating journey now allow us to reach the conclusions of the journey – as a whole and in its different phases in particular. Indeed it will allow us to answer why female shopfloor workers in Sri Lanka's apparel industry are called *lamai* and, consequently, what role HRM plays in the process of articulating the workers' collective identity as *lamai* along with other relational research questions.

Concluding the Journey

As the reader has experienced during this journey (un)doing the workers' collective identity as *lamai* is a complex process. It (dis)appears in multiple ways and means. So in this section, by adhering to the research questions of the thesis, I discuss the conclusions I have arrived at in this journey as a whole and in its different phases and facets in particular.

Social actors, texts and (un)doing *lamai*

Female shopfloor workers' collective identity in Sri Lanka's apparel industry, as we have recognized, is heterogeneous, although it repeatedly (dis)appears under the collective

signature of *lamai*. The identity is variously depicted by many different actors in the industry as well as wider Sri Lankan society – in and through a variety of different texts. To refer to and represent the workers and indeed to mark the workers' very (non)existence in the industry these actors and so the texts that they weave and interweave, utter not only the term *lamai* but also other relational colloquialisms such as *ganu lamai* (young women or girls), *kello* (girls) etc. In addition they use and depict formal terms/identities such as *tharuniyan* (young women), female workers and the like. Ironically these formal identities often co-exist with signifiers that signify 'feeble' and 'negative' characteristics of the workers such as *asarana* (helpless) and thus *asarana tharuniyan* (helpless young women) as in newspaper reportage, for example. Further when the workers are portrayed in other social texts in the wider society, mainly in cinematic texts, these formal, 'decent' terms/identities are virtually absent. In contrast the workers' collective identity often appears alongside with 'pejorative' signifiers such as *naraka* (bad, naughty), *game gode* (rural rustic), *noasandala* (immoral) etc. and in fact as *naraka lamai* (naughty girls), *game gode lamai*/*kello* (rural rustic girls), *noasandala kello* (immoral girls) and so forth.

Official-written texts of the industry – in its nascent liberalized economic context and until the 1990s – on the other hand, suppress these 'pejorative' identities. Instead they, as we have recognized, use both formal terms such as *tharuniyan* (young women) and colloquialisms such as *ganu lamai* (girls), perhaps with the brand/identity *Juki* to articulate the workers' collective identity in the industry. However, after the 1990s not only the brand/identity *Juki* but also colloquialisms such as *ganu lamai* 'evaporated' in official-written texts of the industry and indeed of its (doing) HRM. As such these texts further strengthened the coining of new 'feminine' job identities such as *machine operatorwariyan*

(female machine operators) – a trend that emerged in the mid 1980s. And subsequently they depicted 'gender neutral' job identities such as *machine operators*; *thathwa pareekshaka* (quality checkers) and the like. Table 1 summarizes these findings in terms of the secondary data reported and discussed in chapter 4, as gathered and generated mainly from newspapers and cinematic texts and my own fieldwork in the Katunayake FTZ.

Table 1: How female shopfloor workers are portrayed in written texts in the wider society and the industry

Actors/Texts	Terms Used in Sinhala Texts	Terms Used in English Texts
Newspaper reportage on the industry	*tharuniyan* (young women); *asarana tharuniyan* (helpless young women); *daruwan* (children, daughters/sons); *angalum sevikavan* (apparel manufacturing female workers)	girls; working girls; children; workers; female workers; women workers; *Juki keli* (*Juki* pieces)
Cinematic texts	*lamaya/lamai; naraka lamai* (bad/naughty girls); *lassana ganu lamai* (beautiful girls); *duwa* (daughter); *kella/kello* (girl/s); *noasandala kella/kello* (immoral girl/s); *asarana kella/kello* (helpless girl/s); *pissu kella/kello* (silly girl/s); *game gode kello* (rural rustic girls); *patta vesi* (dirty whore)	not applicable (n.a.)
Official-written texts of the industry published in newspapers (1977-1990s)	*tharuniyan* (young women); *ganu lamai* (girls); *asrumkaranniyan* (female packing workers); *operatorwariyan* (female operators); *operators*	sewing girls
Official-written texts of the industry and/or of (doing) HRM published in newspapers and surrounding environs of the zone (since the 1990s)	*machine operatorwariyan* (female machine operators); *screen printers*; *embroider*[y] *operators*; *thathwa pareekshaka* (quality checker)	girls

This 'evaporation' of the workers' *ganu lamai* (young women or girls) identity along with the brand/identity *Juki* in the official-written texts of (doing) HRM in the industry does not mean that it led to a total effacement of (doing) the *lamai* identity. Instead this disappearance, as we have seen, is the deferred presence of (doing) the *lamai* identity itself. Thus not only in social texts such as cinematic texts, newspaper reportage etc. but also in texts that are woven and interwoven in the apparel manufacturing companies – ChillCo and HotCo – doing female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* remains undisturbed.

As these texts embody actors in ChillCo and HotCo utter the term *lamaya/lamai* – along with other relational/residual colloquialisms such as *mahana lamai* (sewing girls), *ganu lamai* (young women or girls), *issue girls* etc. – to refer to and represent the workers. Simultaneously they also use 'official-formal' terms such as team members, *kandayam samajikayo* (team members), seamstresses, employees, *manawa sampatha* (human resource) and so forth to (un)do the workers' identity in these work milieus when they narrate their stories in Sinhala.

But interestingly when these oral texts are woven in English, the 'gender neutral' term/identity *lamai* evaporates. Instead the term 'girls' takes the place of the term/identity *lamai* to represent the workers which is also substituted by the 'official-formal' term/identity 'workers' and vice versa. However, when it comes to official-*written* texts of (doing) HRM in ChillCo and HotCo, and particularly when the texts are in English not only the term/identity *lamai* but also 'girls' evaporate. In fact we can see seamstress/es, machine operator/s, team member/s etc., but not *lamai* or girls. But when official-written texts of (doing) HRM are in Sinhala – the subaltern language in the companies and indeed in the

wider industry – uttering the term *lamai* and indeed doing the workers' collective identity as *lamai* is not totally absent. Nevertheless this 'presence' is not as vivid as it is in the oral texts that are woven and interwoven in Sinhala. Thus, as we have already seen, (doing) female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* substitutes for (and is substituted by) other relational/residual signifiers/identities as it oscillates from one context/text to another and also from one language to another – from Sinhala to English and vice versa – mostly as part and parcel of (un)doing HRM in these work milieus. Table 2 summarizes these findings in terms of the primary and secondary data – oral and written texts – gathered and generated at ChillCo and HotCo and articulated and discussed in chapter 5.

Table 2: How female shopfloor workers are portrayed in the texts of ChillCo and HotCo

Actors/Texts		Terms Used in Sinhala Texts	Terms Used in English Texts
ChillCo	**Managers (oral texts)**	*lamaya/lamai*; *ganu lamai* (girls); *mahana lamai* (sewing girls); *hodama lamaya/ lamai* (best girl/s); *issue girls; seamstress*; *team members*; *team leaders*; *operators*; *manawa sampatha* (human resource); *employees*; *daruwo* (children, daughters/sons)	girl/s; good skilled employees
	Non-managerial workers (oral texts)	*lamaya/lamai*; *mahana lamai* (sewing girls); *daruwo* (children, daughters/sons); *seamstress*; *team members*; *team leaders*; *employees*; *samajikayo* (members)	n.a.
	Shopfloor workers (oral texts)	*lamai; nangi* (younger sister); *akka* (elder sister); *kandayame samajikayo* (team members)	n.a.
	Official-written texts of (doing) HRM	*lamai; kandyam samagika* (team member); *kandayam nayaka* (team leader); *samagikawan* (female	seamstress; machine operators; operators; team member; team leader;

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		members); *sevikavan* (female workers)	members
HotCo	**Managers (oral texts)**	*lamaya/lamai*; *ganu aya* or *ganu* (women); *ganu lamai* (girls); *kantha pakshya* (women folks); *Juki kello* (*Juki* girls); *mahana kello* (sewing girls); *stiff girls*; *nangi* (younger sister); *sampatha* (asset, treasure, resource); *duwe* (daughter); *puthe* (son/ daughter); *team leaders*; *machine operators*; *operators*; *sewakayo* (workers)	girl/s; worker/s
	Non-managerial workers (oral texts)	*lamaya/lamai*; *machine operators; seamstress*	n.a.
	Shopfloor workers (oral texts)	*lamaya/lamai*; *operators*	n.a.
	Official-written texts of (doing) HRM	*machine operators*; *machine kriyakarawanniyan* (female machine operators); *mahum shilpini* (female sewing technician); *athudaukauwan* (helpers); *samagikawan* (female members); *sevikavan* (female workers)	seamstress; machine operators; team member; team leader

Paradoxically enough even the workers themselves are eager to utter the term *lamai* to refer to and represent them and indeed do their collective identity as *lamai* in these work milieus. But, as we have seen, they also 'resist' and so attempt to negate this doing of their collective identity as *lamai*, particularly when they are asked or conscious about it. Interestingly here they often take refuge in official-formal job identities such as *kandayam samajikayo* (team members) and the like as in textual HRM.

Meantime worker-feminist activists in the *kalape* openly resist to and so attempt to undo (doing) the workers' collective identity as *lamai*. In these attempts at 'undoing' the *lamai* identity they often coin a 'new' term/identity for the workers as *kamkaru sthreen* (women

labourers/workers) which the reader has not confronted in any other spatiotemporal arrangements in the industry. Nevertheless these attempts at undoing, as we have seen, are also often contaminated by (doing) the *lamai* identity itself in the industry, particularly in the context of the *kalape*.

Unlike in the worker-feminist activists' texts doing the workers' collective identity as *lamai* is explicit in the texts woven by other social actors in the *kalape* (*viz.* boarding house owners, small shop owners and the like). These actors, as we have seen, are eager to categorize the workers as a 'roguish' group who live in the *kalape*. As part and parcel of this categorization they not only bring back lowly identities such as garment *lamai/kello*, *Juki kello* (*Juki* girls) etc. They also highlight the workers' 'conduct' and, consequently, do their collective identity as *naraka* (*ganu*) *lamai* (naughty girls) – the Other of the 'good girls' of Sri Lankan modernity (Lynch 2002; 2007). However, this doing of the workers' collective identity upon their (mis)conduct, as we have seen it, is also in process. The workers, their identity, are thus also depicted as *asarana game lamai* (helpless village girls) who are lost in the 'city' – the *kalape*. Also they are linked even to '*campus kello*' (campus girls) – a relatively privileged and honoured identity in the wider Sri Lankan society.

But the workers' 'dissident voices' as marked in their self-created texts in the *kalape* often challenge and negate not only the 'naughty girls' identity but also their feeble, helpless identity as *lamai* in the industry. Paradoxically enough in these attempts of undoing the *lamai* identity the workers use and utter the terms such as *lamai*, *ganu lamai*, *Juki machine* etc. – along with formal terms such as *operators*, *tharuniyan* (young women) and the like – to mark their resistance to their oppression and oppressors in the industry and the *kalape*,

despite the embedded risk of bringing back and restoring their lowly identity as *lamai* if not as *Juki lamai* or *Juki kello* (*Juki* girls) in the industry in general and the *kalape* in particular. Table 3 summarizes these findings in terms of the primary and secondary data – oral and written texts – gathered and generated in the *kalape* and articulated and discussed in chapter 6.

Table 3: How female shopfloor workers are portrayed in the texts in the *kalape*

Actors/Texts	Terms Used in Sinhala Texts	Terms/Identities Acknowledged in Sinhala Texts
Boarding house owners, small shop owners and the matron of the girls' hostel (oral texts)	*lamai; ganu lamai; duppath lamai* (poor girls); *garment lamai*, *kalape lamai* (zone girls); *oya kandayama* (that group);	*Juki lamai*; *Juki keli* (*Juki* pieces); *garment kello* (garment girls); *kalape kello* (zone girls)
Worker-feminist activists (oral texts)	*lamai; ganu lamai* (girls)*; garment lamai; antha asarana lamai* (extremely helpless girls)*; manda buddhika lamaya* (mentally retarded child); *wadunnathi lamaya* (non-grownup child); *kello* (girls); *kamkaru sthreen* (women labourers); *eka kandayamak* (a one group); *kamkaruwo* (labourers, workers); workers	*Juki keli* (*Juki* pieces); *gediya* (fruit/crop); *Juki badu* (*Juki* goods/commodities); *kella* (piece), *baduwa* (good or commodity)
Worker's self-created texts (written texts)	*lamai*; *ganu lamai, kella/kello* (girls); *neganiya* (younger sister)*; diriya diyaniay* (courageous daughter); *diriya landa* (courageous woman)*; diriya katha* (courageous woman); *yuwathiyan* (women); *soyuriyan* (female colleagues); *sewikawa* (female worker) *machine operator; operatorwariya* (female operator)	n.a.

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(Un)doing *lamai*: whose burden?

In this context the formation and construction of female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* in Sri Lanka's apparel industry appears as a sole act neither of social actors in wider Sri Lankan society nor of the actors in the industry and its surrounding environs – in the *kalape*. Rather it appears as a process which these actors including the workers themselves are, collectively and individually, all involved in and accountable for.

This 'collective burden' of doing the *lamai* identity, however, does not mean that the burden is equally shared among these actors and so the texts that they weave and interweave. Nor does it mean that their versions or approaches to (un)doing the *lamai* identity are homogeneous. On the contrary, the 'weight' of this burden and the ways in which they (un)do the *lamai* identity differ, more or less, from one group/text to another. For example, newspaper reportage and official-written texts of the industry utter the formal terms such as *tharuniyan* (young women), *machine operatorwariyan* (female machine operators), *angalum sevikavan* (female apparel workers), workers and the like along with colloquialisms such as *ganu lamai*, girls etc. to portray the workers in the industry (see table 1). But these formal terms/identities are virtually absent in the cinematic texts. Instead they are eager to bring back the 'pejorative' identities of the workers in general and women and migrant young women in the wider Sri Lankan society in particular such as *game gode kello* (village rustic girls), *noasandala kello* (immoral girls), *vesi* (whores) etc. (see table 1).

This diversity-of-unity is also explicit in the texts that are woven and interwoven by the actors in ChillCo and HotCo. For example, the managerial and non-managerial actors' texts (not these of shopfloor workers) in these companies utter the term *mahana lamai* (sewing

girls) to highlight the 'insignificant' role that the workers play in the industry and so to do their (lowly) collective identity. However, this signifier/identity is absent in the oral texts that are woven by the workers in these milieus (see table 2). Further, as we have already recognised, the workers often 'resist' and so attempt to negate this doing of their collective identity as *lamai*. Nevertheless they also utter the term *lamai* to refer to and represent themselves and indeed do their collective identity in the industry as *lamai*. This *un*doing is virtually absent in the texts that are woven by other actors in the companies, although some female actors, for example the Floor Manager in HotCo, do express their displeasure about (doing) the identity.

This diversity-of-unity is also notable when we compare and contrast not only oral texts with written texts, and Sinhala texts with English texts but also oral texts that are woven and interwoven in ChillCo with these in HotCo, particularly by the managerial actors. For example, doing the *lamai* identity is vivid in oral texts, particularly in Sinhala. But this doing is virtually absent in official-written texts of (doing) HRM, particularly when they are in English. Also managerial actors in HotCo are rather enthusiastic to narrate the immorality and 'lowly works/acts' of their female shopfloor workers – sometimes with a comparison to female shopfloor workers in ChillCo – and so to bring back the workers' 'pejorative' identities such as *mahana kello* (sewing girls), *Juki kello* (*Juki* girls) etc. in the industry, mainly in the *kalape* (see table 2). But this comparison and so this doing is not explicit in the texts woven by ChillCo's managerial actors.

And diversity among the texts that are woven and interwoven by the actors in the *kalape* is more vivid than in the texts that are woven in any other socio-spatial spheres in the

industry. Unlike other actors whom we have already encountered in the wider Sri Lankan society and ChillCo and HotCo, boarding house owners and small shop owners in the *kalape* are eager to utter the terms *garment lamai* and *kalape lamai* (zone girls) to refer to and represent the workers and indeed to do their collective identity (see table 3). This doing, as we have seen, emerged mostly as part and parcel of the workers' socio-economic background and their *pahath weda* (lowly works/acts). As such the way in which these actors portray the workers is complicit with and mirrors, more or less, the workers' identity as depicted in written texts in the wider Sri Lankan society, particularly in the cinematic texts (see tables 1 and 3). In contrast the workers are generally portrayed as *kamkaru sthreen* (women labourers/workers) in the texts that are woven and interwoven by the worker-feminist activists. Nevertheless these texts also embody the presence of the signifier/identity *Juki* – perhaps to highlight the workers' very (non)existence – in the *kalape* (see table 3). Thus in the con-text of the *kalape* the activists appear as antagonists to doing the *lamai* identity whereas other actors such as boarding house owners etc. emerge as advocates of doing it. However, both groups and so the texts that they weave and interweave categorise, more or less, the workers as a particular or 'roguish' group live in the *kalape*. Meantime the workers' self-created texts in the *kalape* utter both formal terms and colloquialisms to mark their very (non)existence in the industry as *lamai* (see table 3).

Despite this diversity-of-unity and these actors' degree of involvement in (un)doing the *lamai* identity, what is common is that they and the texts that they weave and interweave – irrespective of their ethico-political boundaries and objectives – utter the term *lamai* to refer to and represent the workers and indeed (un)do their collective identity in the industry as *lamai*, mainly when the texts are in Sinhala and in oral form. As a result the signifier

lamai in the con-text of Sri Lanka's apparel industry, I argue, (dis)appears as the grand signification of (doing) the female shopfloor workers' collective identity in Sri Lanka's apparel industry. On the other hand, this doing is shared by different actors in the industry and wider society irrespective of their roles and degree of involvement in the industry. This common utterance and so the 'collective burden' of (un)doing the *lamai* identity indeed demonstrates how these multiple social actors gather together, intermingle and entwine with each other to do, narrate, restore and even to undo female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai*.

Thus like these actors the texts that they weave and interweave, I argue, are not 'isolated utterances'. Rather they intermingle and entwine with each other as threads of a web – to do, narrate, to restore and to undo the workers' collective identity as *lamai* – and thus (dis)appear as part and parcel of the 'nexus of the texts' in Sri Lanka's apparel industry. On the other hand, due to the intermingling of a particular text with other texts in the nexus it not only ruptures its own ethico-political aim or boundary – who writes for whom and for what – which distinguishes the text from the rest. It also upsets its place in the chronological if not genealogical order of (un)doing the *lamai* identity in the industry, because the voice of a particular text, which was woven in a particular context, remerges and echoes in another text, which is woven in a different context. For example, the workers' 'misconduct' as marked in newspaper reportage (in the 1990s) echoes, more or less, in the oral texts woven by HotCo's GM and MHR (in the present-day industry). And the workers as portrayed in the boarding house owners' oral texts in the *kalape* mirror the workers' collective selves as in cinematic texts and vice versa. So one text (dis)appears on behalf of the other; one substitutes for other, one represents other voices and vice versa. As

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a result a singular text that explicitly embodies and is embedded in doing the *lamai* identity, for example, always marks its own rupture, always tends to erase what it has already traced. Indeed it is also always in a position to signify the possibility of undoing the identity – which is equally possible and true in a text that explicitly embodies and is embedded in undoing the identity. As such different social actors' roles and involvement in the industry and thus the ethico-political boundaries of texts that they weave and interweave become fluid and fragile. Nevertheless the singularity of each text remains unaltered. Thus, in conclusion, as far as how different actors gather together and intermingle with each other to form and construct the *lamai* identity is concerned I argue that there is no notable singular 'doer' behind (un)doing female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* in Sri Lanka's apparel industry. Instead this is a 'collective burden' of social actors, including the workers, in the industry and its surrounding environs – i.e., the *kalape* – and the wider society, despite the (apparently) antagonistic nature of the roles that they play and perform and so the ethico-political boundaries of the texts that they weave and interweave in the industry and the wider Sri Lankan society.

Why does (*ganu*) *lamai* matter?

Like this burden of (un)doing the *lamai* identity, which is shared among the different social actors, the cause of or rationale behind the formation and construction of female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* appears as multifaceted. In fact these social actors and so the texts that they weave and interweave have their own versions of or 'excuses' for doing the *lamai* identity – which problematizes the prime, singular cause of this doing. Nevertheless these excuses are scattered mainly around the reasons of 'it is easy to use' or 'it is a normal thing', as we can see in table 4.

Table 4: Excuses for doing *lamai*

Actor	Reason(s)/Excuse(s)
ChillCo's supervisor 1, Amali	What *lamai* mean, generally [they] come in the morning [and go] evening, [they work for] eight hours. They have a small part [responsibility] of a small garment. Their responsibility is only for that, restricted there. Their responsibility is only within that area.
ChillCo's supervisor 2, Thamara	It is easy [to use], so [we are] used [to it]
HotCo's MHR, Chamin	It is not in the same way as *Juki kello* [*Juki* girls], *mahana kello* [sewing girls]. Even though we commonly call them *lamai* mostly [we call them] as *nangi* [younger sister] or if we know [their] names we call them by names. The term *lamai* was originally created with the idea [that the workers are] a group that is in somewhat lower level than the *management*[159] and [so] should be looked after by the *management*, as I think as [why calling] *lamai*.
HotCo's AMHR, Kumari	I think it is because easy to use. As I think that it is because there are many [shopfloor workers]. Sometimes [it is] I think because it is easy to use, when we try to call [them as] *sewakayo* [workers - it is quite odd].
HotCo's Floor Manager, Lalani	Now when we are talking with you, *Sir*, we can call as *lamai*. Now when we go near *lamai* we never call them *lamai*.
Boarding house owner in the *kalape*, Siril	Really there is no any other term [name] to call [the workers], isn't there?
Activist in the *kalape*, Thanuja	[It] may be a thing that has come when they come to here [the zone]; they are as a one group [*eka kandayamak*] gathered together with that [their] *O-Level* education.
Activist in the *kalape*, Mervin	Why I call *lamai*, because [the workers'] unawareness.
Activist in the *kalape*, Nilupa	I don't know how it has been originated. Even when I came [to the zone] this is which is used. …the saying *lamai* is used. That is a normal thing. There is a huge objection for that [this usage]. But that is [still] used as a normal thing.

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[159] The italicized English terms are in original Sinhala text.

Despite these avowed 'innocent' reasons or excuses, uttering the term *lamai* to refer to and represent female shopfloor workers in the industry, as we have recognized, upsets what the term/identity *lamai* connotes and implies – its rather innocent, honoured meaning or temperament – in the wider Sri Lankan society. Consequently it tends to signify or often narrates a lowly collective identity of these workers. Indeed it often goes or is complicit with negative signifiers, characteristics and connotations such as 'feeble', 'helpless', 'poor', 'rustic', 'ignorant' and so forth as we can see in table 5 below. As such, despite these avowed 'innocent' reasons or excuses, the utterance of the term *lamai* to refer to and represent the female shopfloor workers in different socio-spatial arrangements in the industry necessarily denotes neither its denotative meaning(s) as such (see for example *Gunasena Great Sinhala Dictionary* 2005) nor its connotative meanings in the wider Sri Lankan society. Instead it, as we have recognized, denotes '(you) little ones' – *lamai* – the grand signification of *childrenized* female labour in the con-text of Sri Lanka's apparel industry.

Table 5: What goes with the term/identity *lamai* in the industry?

Key Characteristic/Temperament	Key Narrators/Texts
Indulge in sex or *anawashya prema sambandatha* (unnecessary love affairs) and other 'misconduct'	Newspaper reportage; cinematic texts, boarding house owners; small shop owners; ChillCo's counsellor, Kamala; HotCo's MHR, Chamin; activist in the Courage, Thanuja
Members of a 'roguish group' in the *kalape*	Boarding house owners; small shop owners; activist in the Courage, Thanuja
Backward and avoid responsibility or undertake little responsibility in the industry	ChillCo's OM, Lucky; HotCo's FM, Gihan; HotCo's MHR, Chamin; HotCo's AHRM, Kumari; ChillCo's PA, Sumudu; ChillCo's supervisor 1, Amali

Ignorant and unaware	Activists in the Life, Mervin and Nilupa; activist in the Courage, Thanuja; boarding house owner in the *kalape*, Siril; cinematic texts
Feeble; helpless, uneducated and poor	HotCo's GM, Kasun; HotCo's MHR, Chamin; ChillCo's PA, Sumudu; ChillCo's supervisor 1, Amali; activists in the Life, Mervin and Nilupa; activist in the Courage, Thanuja; boarding house owner in the *kalape*, Siril; cinematic texts; newspaper reportage

Therefore, it is vivid that what the term/identity *lamai* signifies in the con-text of Sri Lanka's apparel industry is neither the workers' *ganu lamai* identity in the wider Sri Lankan society – which these young migrant women brought when they arrived in the industry – nor their class/occupational identity as 'factory women' as such. Likewise it does not portray the workers' 'official job identities' such as seamstresses, machine operators, team members or human resources as in textual HRM. Nor does it embody *kamkaru sthreen* (women labourers/workers) *per se* as narrated by the activists' texts in the *kalape*. Nevertheless it does not totally efface (the possibilities of) these relational/residual identities. In this context, as a conclusion of this journey, I argue that the signifier/identity *lamai* amalgamates the workers' *ganu lamai* – gender – identity in the wider Sri Lankan society and their (suppressed) class/occupational identity as 'factory women' in the industry – along with their 'official job identities'. In so doing it not only signifies and marks the childrenized female labour and the workers' very (non)existence in the industry. It also marks or is a means of marking the workers' resistance to their very (non)existence. The *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers is in fact a result of and so echoes the interplay between the workers' gender – *ganu lamai* – identity in the wider society and their (suppressed) class/occupational identity in the industry, which also mirrors some research findings on and theoretical stances of the interplay between gender and class as far

as the formation of these identities is concerned (Butler 1990; Collinson 1992; Hall et al. 2007). However, this interplay is not a mere act. In contrast, it amalgamates these two constructs if not power axes (gender and class), as Butler (1990) puts it, and subsequently forms a third one – i.e., childrenized female labour – out of fusion with the signifier *lamai,* which is neither entirely new identity nor a replica of the first two.

Thus, in conclusion, I further argue that doing female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* is not as innocent as what the term/identity connotes in wider Sri Lankan society and perhaps in the work milieus in the industry. Rather it is a palatable means of deploying the agenda of gender of managing female (shopfloor) labour – under the banner of HRM – in the industry. Indeed it tells us how female shopfloor labour on this localized global factory floor is being marginalized, subordinated and indeed childrenized by and through many different processes, procedures and apparatuses – chiefly of (un)doing HRM in the industry – as well as different actors and, consequently, marks the workers' very (non)existence in the industry as *lamai*. Nevertheless I do not suggest that this lowly 'little ones' disposition of the workers is fixed or fixable. Nor do I suggest that it totally effaces (the possibilities of) other relational/residual identities of the workers. Indeed it does not take the workers and so (the possibilities of) their collective identity in the industry into the custody of a grand, monolithic, fixed projective identity, perhaps as 'whores' as Hewamanne (see 2003; 2008) suggests to us (for critique see also Perera 2008). Still although this 'lowliness', I argue, is the arch persona of the workers' collective selves and so of their very (non)existence in the industry as *lamai* (see Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997; Lynch 2002; 2007; Hewamanne 2003; 2008; Attanapola 2005).

Becoming of (un-doing) the *lamai* identity

Thus, as a conclusion of this journey, I further argue that (doing) female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* in Sri Lanka apparel industry is not a fixed or fixable 'thing'. In contrast it is a doable-bind phenomenon which is in process. So it is always subject to production and reproduction through and by the inter-play of social actors (including the workers), institutions, habits and regulatory ideals, norms, behaviour etc. and is indeed performatively constituted. This nature of (doing) the *lamai* identity mirrors the process of the formation and construction of gender identity in more generally and at work in particular, as many suggest (e.g. Butler 1988; 1990; Walkerdine 1989; Ely 1995; Brewis et al. 1997; Adib and Guerrier 2003; Hall et al. 2007; Jeanes 2007; Pullen and Knights 2007; Ybema et al. 2009). But this 'performatively' constituted nature does not necessarily mean that the workers' collective identity as *lamai* is determined by what they do (and undo) in the industry. Instead it is, as we have already seen, largely determined by how the workers and more crucially other actors in the industry and wider society interpret, narrate and renarrate who they/these workers or migrant young women are, and what they do (and undo) in the industry and wider Sri Lankan society. Indeed the *lamai* identity, always (dis)appears as a 'thing' which remains under-construction, always awaiting the next supplement as it oscillates from one context/text to another.

This dangerous supplement, as we have seen it, is, however, not a mere substitution of one signifier for another and vice versa. Rather it appropriates, adds to and fills the void – that of the signifier/signified (Spivak 1988a; 1988b; Derrida 1997; Barthes 2000). Thus the same signifier/identity *lamai*, as it oscillates from one context/text to another, signifies not only the workers' 'lowly' collective identity. It also tends to signify their 'good girls'

temperament as well as the importance of their role in the industry and Sri Lanka's economy, their courage and bravery and so forth – by intermingling with other relational/residual signifiers/identities such as *tharuniyan* (young women); *kandayam samajikayo* (team members), team members, workers, *kamkaru sthreen* (women labourers) and the like. Table 6 exemplifies and summarizes how different actors (un)do the *lamai* identity and so becoming of the identity.

Table 6: Becoming of the *lamai*

Actor/Text	Manifestation
Managing Director of Juki sewing machine training institute in newspaper supplementary	…they are in the category of *tharuniyan* [young women] who earn a good income…
ChillCo's MHR, Athula	We can't do anything without *lamai*. *Machines* don't work by themselves. All the *lamai* here became employee of the month… Nothing can be done without *lamai*.
ChillCo's OM, Lucky	...*lamai* will never allow the *supervisor* to fall behind [underperform]. They somehow try to keep up [to achieve the target].
HotCo's MHR, Chamin	… at ChillCo, there are *lamai* like flowers.
HotCo's Floor Manager, Lalani	Always I tell *lamai* you are our *sampatha* [asset, treasure, resource]. If they are not here, if *lamai* who [are] seated here [are] not here, no one here will have jobs, [they] have nothing to do.
Boarding house owner in the *kalape*, Siril	Normally even in a *campus*, may be called as *campus kello* [campus girls]. Like that these *lamai* are called as *garment lamai*.
Small shop owner in the *kalape*	*Lamai* are good.
Activist in the *kalape*, Thanuja	They are one of the major fractions [who] earn foreign currencies to Sri Lanka.

So the signifier/identity *lamai* in the con-text of Sri Lanka's apparel industry portrays the workers not only as feeble, naughty, helpless etc. but also as able, good, self-reliant and so forth as it oscillates from one context/text to another. In fact this same signifier/identity *lamai* is a 'remedy' – or a means of resistance to doing the *lamai* identity – as well as a 'poison', the pharmakon of Sri Lanka's apparel industry (Derrida 1981). This process of supplementation nonetheless does not take place through a new medium or passage. Instead when it takes place in the work milieu it, as we have seen, primarily goes on as part and parcel of (un)doing HRM in the industry.

Articulating identities – of employees, of and by HRM

In fact in this process the multiple signifiers or official job identities (*viz.* team members, machine operators and so forth) in textual HRM take the place of the signifier/identity *lamai* along with other relational colloquialisms such as *kello* (girls) etc. Consequently these official identities, as we have seen, 'obliterate' the 'pejorative' nature/temperament of the workers' collective identity as *lamai* and indeed 'fill' what the signifier/identity *lamai* lacks when it is uttered or (dis)appears in different socio-spatial arrangements in the industry. However, this dangerous supplement, this 'filing', as we have seen, does not lead to a total effacement of the workers' collective identity as *lamai*. Rather it is a spatiotemporal moment in which undoing and doing HRM and so local texts and textual HRM intermingle and entwine with each other to fulfil their own 'lack' or 'desires'. Indeed here textual HRM – its multiple signifiers such as team members, machine operators and so forth – negates, conceals, normalizes or legitimizes the 'vulgar' nature of local texts, its multiple signifiers and the apparatuses of undoing HRM which are embodied and embedded in local texts. But this negation never ends the doing of the workers' collective

identity as *lamai*, because doing HRM, as we have recognized, is aware of its impotence in the industry, particularly as far as managing female (shopfloor) labour on the factory floor is concerned. A such, by intermingling with undoing HRM and so local texts, doing HRM and so textual HRM utters the term *lamai* – along with other colloquialisms – to do the *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers whenever it attempts to 'manage' female shopfloor labour in the industry.

Thus this process of supplementation and indeed this intermingling of textual HRM and local texts, on the one hand, mirrors how linguistic categories if not language(s) of (doing) HRM in the industry conceals, as Legge (2001; 2005) might suggest, the childrenization of female labour in the industry and so the 'agenda of gender' of (un)doing HRM in the industry. Still deployment of this agenda in the context of the industry does not take place exactly through its 'established' means – due to the embedded gender bias of the so-called key goals of HRM such as commitment, flexibility, equality etc. and so HRM systems/processes such as recruitment and selection, performance appraisal and so forth, which have already been marked and problematized, particularly by feminist critics of HRM (see for example Woodall 1996; Dickens 1998; Healy 1999; Coates 2004). In contrast this agenda, in the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry, is deployed chiefly by *un*doing HRM – under the auspices of and intermingling with doing HRM – while the 'gender neutrality' of the epistemic community's version of (doing) HRM largely remains undisturbed. For example, as far as promoting a female shopfloor worker into a supervisory position on the factory floor is concerned, the 'equality' of promotion guaranteed by doing HRM – as in its official-written texts, as we have seen in ChillCo and HotCo – remains unaltered. But local texts of undoing HRM – that narrate gender prejudice about female

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workers, for example their 'inability' to cope with the pressure of the supervisory position as compared to the 'ability' of their male counterparts – interfere with this promotion process. During this process doing HRM, the 'equality' of promotion as in the official-written texts, however, does not play a passive role. Instead it tends to normalize and indeed 'ethicalise' this unethical, biased promotion practice – 'undoing' of HRM. This intermingling between textual HRM and local texts (of *un*doing HRM) therefore also mirrors how gender prejudices in the wider society, as some researchers suggest, tend to create negative impacts on women during different processes of HRM such as recruitment and selection, performance appraisal etc. in particular (Collinson et al. 1990; Morgan and Knights 1991; Woodall 1996; Lane 2000) and indeed the agenda of gender of (un)doing HRM in Sri Lanka's apparel industry in general. Consequently, this intermingling, on the other hand, demonstrates the role played by (un)doing HRM, its language or texts, in the process of the formation and construction of female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai*. It, on the other hand, sustains the continued existence of (un)doing HRM in the industry. Indeed textual HRM and local texts, by intermingling and entwining with each other, normalize this doing of workers' collective identity as *lamai* as an innocent, commonly shared utterance or act. Thus, in conclusion, I argue that (un)doing HRM, its language or multiple texts, in Sri Lanka's apparel industry – among other forces, processes, apparatuses, and actors – does play the crucial role in the process of the formation and construction of female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* in the work milieu.

This role, as I further argue, is twofold if not has a dual-effect. In fact this role of HRM in the process of the formation of the workers' identity also affects the nature and disposition of HRM itself. Indeed in this process HRM ruptures or further widens the rupture of its

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'own' identity – as in market managerialism and normative models and definitions of the phenomenon – and, consequently, creates a 'new' identity in the industry. Indeed what we confront as HRM in the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry is not a fixed or single managerial discipline in its own right. Nor does it embody a set of managerial apparatuses which is self-reliant. Rather it is a set of different events or texts articulated, crafted and negotiated by different actors in the industry and wider society as well as in the epistemic community. Indeed in conclusion of this renarrating journey I argue that the phenomenon of HRM in Sri Lanka's apparel industry comes to our view as a 'web of texts' in which the multiple texts – textual HRM and local texts – intermingle and entwine with each other in the process of (un)doing HRM in the industry.

This peculiar nature of HRM in this subaltern non-western socio-economic context, I argue, problematizes the rhetoric–reality dualism of HRM within which linguistic categories if not language(s) of HRM are treated as rhetoric, the antagonistic other of the realities of HRM (Keenoy 1990; 1997; Legge 1995; 2005; Dickens 1998). So it urges us to critically reflect upon the 'popular' (mis)understanding of the linguistic categories or language(s) of HRM as in critical scholars' account of HRM, as far as the role of language(s) of HRM, textual HRM and local texts, in the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry is concerned. Further it is, as some researchers remind us (Kamoche 1995; Watson 1995a; 1995b; Janssens and Steyaert 2009), insistent about the impossibility of restricting the language(s) of HRM to 'sheer' rhetoric. Here the language(s) of HRM – textual HRM and local texts – in the industry does not appear as something antagonistic to the reality but as an unavoidable part of (the construction of) social reality in everyday socio-organizational life and so of the workers' very (non)existence in the industry as *lamai*. Thus, in conclusion, by aligning with

some critical scholars in employment management, I argue that the nature and disposition of HRM in the context of Sri Lanka's apparel industry *is* in process (Keenoy 1999; Steyaert and Janessens 1999). Nevertheless I do not suggest that this becoming of the phenomenon of HRM in the industry is either due to the differences in the theoretical positions of those who produce and reproduce HRM as such (Legge 2001) or merely due to change in the way in which look at the phenomenon of HRM (Keenoy 1999). On the contrary it is, as I argue, primarily due to the 'inherent' nature – the rupture of HRM that emerged at the very moment HRM appeared in the apparel industry – of HRM, and so the internal dynamics of HRM itself – the ways in which textual HRM and local texts entwine and intermingle with each other in the process of (un)doing HRM.

In this context, as concluding remarks of this journey, I argue that (doing) the *lamai* identity creates an 'indissoluble' ethical paradox within which adult, able female shopfloor workers become *lamai* and, consequently, objects or othered Other – *Juki kello* (*Juki* girls) if not *keli* (pieces) – in Sri Lanka's apparel industry. As a result those whom we confront as female shopfloor workers in the industry and thus in the multiple texts of (un)doing the *lamai* identity are neither (*ganu*) *lamai* as such nor 'factory women' *per se*. Nor even are they 'mere' seamstresses, machine operators, team members, *kamkaru sthreen* (women labourers/workers) etc., but 'little ones' – the childrenized selves of the adult workers in Sri Lanka's apparel industry. Nevertheless this doing of the *lamai* identity (dis)appears as an innocent, commonly shared act and utterance as it (dis)appears as part and parcel of (un)doing HRM in the industry and indeed as it is negated, concealed, normalized and legitimized by doing HRM, the multiple signifiers of textual HRM. But this

effacement is ephemeral, the deferred presence of (doing) the *lamai* identity itself. Thus, in sum, the overall conclusions arrived at in this thesis are;

- The *lamai* identity of female shopfloor workers in Sri Lanka's apparel industry is a 'double-bind' phenomenon that (dis)appears under the collective signature of *lamai*. It amalgamates gender and class/occupation of the migrant factory women and subsequently forms a third one – i.e., childrenized female labour – out of fusion with the signifier *lamai,* which is neither entirely new identity nor a replica of the first two.

- There is no any notable singular 'doer' behind (un)doing female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* in the industry. Instead this is a 'collective burden' of social actors, including the workers, in the industry and its surrounding environs – i.e., the *kalape* – and wider Sri Lankan society.

- Despite its double-bind nature, (doing) female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* is not as innocent as what the term/identity connotes in the wider Sri Lankan society and perhaps in the work milieus in the industry. Rather it is a palatable means of deploying the agenda of gender of managing female (shopfloor) labour – under the banner of HRM – in Sri Lanka's apparel industry.

- (Un)doing HRM, its multiple texts, in Sri Lanka's apparel industry plays the most crucial role in the process of the formation and construction of female shopfloor workers' collective identity as *lamai* in the work milieu since it normalizes and legitimizes this process and indeed the childrenization of female labour in the industry. Therefore the language(s) of HRM does not appear as something antagonistic to reality of managing labour in the industry – 'sheer' rhetoric – but as an unavoidable part of (the construction of) social reality in everyday socio-

organizational life and so of the workers' very (non)existence in the industry as *lamai*.

- The role played by HRM in the process of the formation of the workers' collective identity also affects the nature and disposition of HRM itself. In this process HRM ruptures or further widens the rupture of its 'own' identity – as in market managerialism and normative models and definitions – and, consequently, creates a 'new' identity in the industry. Indeed the phenomenon of HRM in the industry comes to our view as a 'web of texts' in which the multiple texts – textual HRM and local texts – intermingle and entwine with each other in the process of (un)doing HRM in the industry. This rupture nonetheless does not destabilise HRM in the industry. Instead it sustains the continued existence of the phenomenon of HRM in the industry.

Limitations of the Study

The findings and conclusions arrived at in this thesis are not totally free from drawbacks and limitations of this reading or renarrating journey. Other than general time and spatial constraints and my own subjectivities as a heterosexual, male researcher of colour there are additional limitations of the thesis. Among these, transcribing and translation of data – oral and written texts in Sinhala – can be identified as the major limitation of the thesis, although it is inevitable. Other than a few texts, the majority of the oral and written texts which I have gathered, generated and read in this thesis are in Sinhala. Unlike English, Sinhala has two different grammatical structures in 'spoken Sinhala' and 'written Sinhala' (see Disanayaka 1998). In addition some of the terms in Sinhala, as we have seen in the case of the term *lamai* for example, appear in many forms. Further, due to their culturally

specific nature some of the terms and phrases in Sinhala are harder to translate into English. So the translation process – from Sinhala to English – tends to hinder, more or less, the 'original' temperament of the Sinhala texts.

In addition my own gender emerged as a cultural obstacle during the fieldwork in accessing the premises such as boarding houses, hostels etc. and also when interviewing female participants. Some female participants of the interviews, as I encountered, were either somewhat reluctant to share their 'real' experiences in the industry or took a somewhat vigilant approach when narrating their stories. Moreover, to gain access to ChillCo and HotCo and their premises such as factory floor, cafeterias etc. I had to obtain permission from the different managers of the companies. So attitudes and behaviour of these 'gate keepers' also shaped and aligned the nature and the effectiveness of the fieldwork to some extent. Thus the conclusions arrived at in this thesis are not the absolute, general(ized) truth, but a supplementary-critical view or reading of (un)doing female shopfloor workers collective identity as *lamai* in Sri Lanka's apparel industry and what role HRM plays in this process. Just like (doing) the *lamai* identity itself they are open-ended, awaiting the next supplement.

Suggestions for Further Research

On this basis then and recalling that the phenomena which we 'deal' with in this thesis still remain largely under-researched I conclude by looking to future research possibilities. Some researchers claim the fluid and fragile nature of men's masculine identities in the work milieu (e.g. Alvesson 1998; Hall et al. 2007). This fluidity, as I have encountered it, also might be the case in Sri Lanka's apparel industry. As far as shopfloor workers in the

industry are concerned there are a number of male workers who do seamstress or similar jobs on the factory floor. However, these men's existence on the factory floor is overshadowed by female shopfloor workers and indeed their collective identity as *lamai*. But, as some managerial actors in ChillCo and HotCo suggest and I have personally experienced, these 'male seamstresses' role in the industry is somewhat different to the role of their female counterparts. So they are being largely treated as potential 'trouble makers' in the industry. Interestingly this 'trouble maker' identity of male shopfloor workers is mostly depicted as part and parcel of their 'traditional' role as representatives and activists in trade unions or in HRM driven initiatives such as JCCs in the industry (see Devanarayana 1997; Silva 1997). In this context – based on my long-term engagement with this localized global factory floor and (un)doing identities and managing employment there – I suggest that it would be interesting to know how these 'male seamstresses' struggle to preserve, construct and negotiate their (assumedly given) masculine identities – by being 'trouble makers' or otherwise – which are vanishing under the collective signature of *lamai.* Indeed it is important to know does this struggle compel them to be 'trouble makers' or vice versa? And what role does their engagement in the trade unions, particularly in HRM driven initiatives such as JCCs, play in the formation and construction of the 'male seamstresses' identities in the industry? Does this mirror or is this a cause of female shopfloor workers' underrepresentation in industrial relations encounters in the industry?

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