One of the unintended consequences of apartheid’s massive injustices of social division and inequality was, paradoxically, the production of relations of racial proximity. This pinpoints, in fact, one of apartheid’s internal contradictions: as its white beneficiaries came increasingly to rely on the domestic labour provided by an oppressed black population, so a series of intimate white spheres – the site of the home, and more particularly, the care of children – were effectively opened up to ‘interracial’ contact. It is for this reason that, psychoanalytically, the literature discussing the relationship between white children and black child-minders (‘nannies’) (Ally, 2009; Cock, 1980, 2011; Motsei, 1990) is so crucial to an understanding of the libidinal economy of apartheid. This literature speaks to the presence of intimacy within structures of power, to the factor of affective attachments, sexual and familial alike, occurring across seemingly impassable divisions of race.

Mbembe (2008) uses the phrase ‘disjunctive inclusions’ in his description of those figures that were, as we might put it, ‘included out’ of the structured inequality of apartheid. His interests are close to my own, certainly inasmuch as he uses this term to refer to the ambiguous inclusions of black subjects in apartheid’s cities, such as, precisely, black ‘nannies’ who were permitted to live on white properties. This poses the general question of racial intimacies in apartheid, and it directs us to childhood reminiscences produced by contributors to the Apartheid Archive Project. The first of the key topics of this chapter can thus be specified by means of a question: how were such ‘disjunctive inclusions’ managed, psychologically, by children, and, more precisely, by white children in particular? A second key objective follows on from the first, as its pragmatic methodological consequence: how we might contribute to a form of psychoanalytic discourse analysis suitable to the task of
analysing narrative texts of apartheid? It is in reference to the emerging area of Lacanian discourse analysis (see Glynos & Stavrakakis, 2003; Neill, 2013; Parker, 2005; Pavón Cuéllar, 2010) that I hope to make a contribution.

Let us begin by citing one of a series of texts prepared for inclusion in the Apartheid Archive Project (2009):

A man named Dyson worked for my parents. He was an affectionate and good-willed man, generous, and he was loved by the family. I remember him always at work in the kitchen. He was considered a good man, trustworthy. In the racist codes of the time he was a ‘good African’ by which was meant that he was faithful, self-sacrificing and big-hearted. He was no doubt, in colonial parlance, a ‘kitchen boy’. I guess that for significant periods in my first years I was under his care. Perhaps there were carefree times before an awareness of race came into play and I was genuinely effusive and natural with him. I can only hope so. I don’t know how and when a change occurred – even for sure that one did – but I do remember at a certain point becoming excessively formal with him, avoidant, distanced, as if a type of enacted superiority and distance had become necessary.

Try as I might I cannot think of touching him, of any loving physical contact, although I am sure that there must have been. This still puzzles me: at what point was it that I became rigid, aware of the need to keep myself apart, to be aloof? These were the appropriate behavioural codes, the implicit rules of contact, that I had assimilated. I was aware that Dyson, despite his smiling and forgiving nature had registered the change in my behaviour and was, I think, saddened by it, yet nonetheless respectful of the stance I had taken.

The time came when the decision was made to leave Zimbabwe. It was a difficult parting; new homes had to be found for the dogs – a particular focus of tears and disbelief for me on the eve of our departure – and a reliable family needed to take over the mortgage of the house that couldn’t be sold under such short notice. The most awful moment in all of this for me, the most poignant and irreversible, was to see Dyson crying, distraught, seemingly inconsolable, on the day we left. Worse yet than this heartbreaking feeling for me was the sense that I could not now break the façade and run up to him and hug him goodbye. I needed now to maintain the self-conscious role of distance and coolness that I had imposed.