

## Response to Robert Romanyshyn

*Pamela J. Power*

At dinner with Joy Schaverien the evening before she was to speak as a visiting analyst at our Los Angeles Institute, I found myself in an unusually intimate discussion, as can occur with someone one first meets. I found myself speaking about the death of my analyst and the unusual "transference phenomena" that had happened in my subsequent "new analysis." She listened carefully, taking in what I was telling her, and then said, "You must write about this." When I paused and looked at her, she explained, "When my patient died, I needed to write about it. It was the only way I could work through it."

I began to write down the vignettes and stories of my experience. They tumbled out over the next several weeks: recollections of "single frames" of the movie I lived during my former analyst's dying process, my own diagnosis, and the near crazy state of mind during the early months of the "new analysis." The vignettes found cohesion and then an opportunity for presentation. I moved from one step to another until I wrote: "It has been over seven years since my former analyst died . . ."

Robert Romanyshyn has provided another lens through which to make sense of my experience. He has helped me comprehend more fully why I had to write this paper. Generously and touchingly, he has penetrated to the heart of the matter, the mystery of the death experience for the one left behind. From grieving his own devastating loss, he found it necessary to return "to those landscapes of mourning" because "the grieving soul hungers for the experience of mourning" and for the "vignettes and stories that witnessed my experience of loss and echoed its collective depths." I noted his reference to "seven years." Why seven years? Does it take seven years to hold experience and meaning, thinking and feeling, in a way that does justice to both and harm to neither?

Robert Romanyshyn has illuminated for me the continued pull to write this story. His description of grief as "a forced individuation process that leads us through old wounds into a confrontation with ourselves" and as a journey "to that far country of loss whose stories guide the way when the storms of grief blow apart those fragile structures of order and meaning that have sheltered our lives" rings powerfully and profoundly true.

I wish to gratefully acknowledge Joy Schaverien for the initial impetus to write this paper and Connie Crosby, JoAnn Culbert-Koehn, and Janet Dallett for their ongoing encouragement and always helpful feedback.

