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## Rejoinder to Séron's Response to "Krashen, a Victim of History"

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"Krashen-bashin'" is a decidedly trite but still useful expression to describe the activity of pointing out all that is wrong with Krashen's theories. There should be a related expression to describe the opposite activity—something like "Krashen-bashin' baiting." This would be the act of riling up Krashen's opponents by merely showing some interest in or sympathy with his ideas. Both of these activities are simply too easy: there is no sport in them. I really wasn't trying to engage in the latter. Séron, however, has categorized me as a fervent Krashenite (Krashen's detractors always seem to assume that there is no other kind). In fact I am more interested in history than I am in Krashen, and therefore in my mind the key word in the title of my article was *history*, not *victim*. Teachers in any field usually are not proficient in the history of their specialization. I saw this as a good opportunity to promote some awareness of the history of language teaching. I should have known, though, that some readers would devote their interest to my nonhistorical thoughts on Krashen. The slightest hint of sympathy for Krashen can bring out the most passionate comments.

Actually, I view Krashen more as a romantic relationship that just didn't work out. Nevertheless, we departed on good terms, and I have learned from the relationship and apply these lessons to life every day. Séron's aversion to Krashen, on the other hand, leads him to give an eloquent description of the shortcomings of Krashen's ideas, but also causes him to misconstrue me on several points. Above all, it causes Séron to overlook the historical nature of the article and to focus on Krashen's theory to a degree that I did not intend.

What caught Séron's attention above all was my use of the word *victim* in the title. He assumes I meant this literally and see Krashen as a martyr of some kind. Instead, I used the term ironically, even hoping for a touch of humor. Of the definitions of *victim* as given by Séron, I was referring to the one wherein one's fate is decided by an agent beyond one's control. It never occurred to me that anyone could think that I was attributing lamblike innocence to one of the most influential applied linguists of our time. No, Krashen was responsible for setting up the conditions that led to the fall.

Séron contends that I think the criticism of Krashen was unusual. In fact I said that it was the viciousness and personal nature of the attacks—and only this—that were surprising. I suggested that there were historical reasons that singled him out for this nastiness. Séron also says that I think the criticism is insufficient to explain his fall. He states, for example, that I describe Krashen

as someone who has been “misunderstood.” Absolutely not! Krashen’s failure is a direct result of being understood all too well. What is there to misunderstand, after all? The simplicity of his theory is both its weakness and strength. Séron adds that I “admit” that Stern’s criteria reveal the inadequacies of Krashen’s theory. On the contrary, I intended to make it clear from the start that Krashen clearly fails this test. I offer no excuse because there is none. No, the question to me is simply whether one can still benefit from his theory. In my case it is Yes. But each to his or her own. I’m just urging teachers to think for themselves occasionally and not to follow blindly. My more than 25 years of teaching and my countless years of learning languages in every situation imaginable tells me that some of what Krashen says is useful.

I am puzzled by the logical connections Séron makes from my Krashen sympathies. He categorizes Krashen’s theory with harmful popular assumptions, no better than an academic urban legend. He somehow ends up equating what I said with “academic license to have everything one says accepted as valid and justified” and even seems to say that this type of thinking may well affect the type of society that we live in. No, I’m just saying that I and others can find something useful in Krashen.

Séron does in fact make a valid criticism. Krashen did try to fit into the mold of scientific researcher and claimed a background in neurolinguistics. His work is filled with scientific vocabulary. But as Séron and I will undoubtedly agree, this does not make him or his work scientific. Séron judges Krashen by the words; I judge him by the results. Krashen’s theory, no matter how scientific anyone claims it to be or not (including Krashen), allows a great deal of “art” on the part of the teacher.

I thank Séron for his well-written comments and criticism. I disagree in a few instances with his absolutist interpretation of Krashen (I see more flexibility in his theory than Séron does), but he neatly sums up the anti-Krashen arguments.

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