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Sommario/riassunto	This book offers foundations for a literary criticism which seeks to mediate between writers and readers belonging to different historical periods or social groupings. This makes it, among other things, a timely intervention in the postmodern "culture wars", though the theory put forward will be of interest not only to students of literature and culture, but also to linguists. Sell describes communication in general as strongly interactive, as very much affected by the disparate situationalities of "sending" and "receiving", yet as by no means completely determined by them. Seen this way, men and women are both social beings and individuals, capable of empathizing with sociohistorical formations which are alien to them, sometimes even to the extent of changing their own life-world. By treating literary activity

as communicational in this same dynamic sense, Sell radically modifies the main paradigms of twentieth-century literary theory, casting much new light on questions of genre, interpretation, affect and ethics.
