ABSTRACT

China's literary scene, which had retreated into obscurity since the Cultural Revolution, flourished once more with the downfall of the Gang of Four. Literary workers were given their rightful place in the society and restrictions on public opinions were loosened; all these contributed to the sudden outbursts of literary works in the seventies. Blending Western literary theories with their traditional writing skills, these writers produced works of a new era, with their own distinct mark of realism and emotionalism. Chinese modern literature once again has become the focus of attention by people both at home and abroad.

Of the numerous writers of this time, Zhang Xianliang (张贤亮) captivates me with his own special flair. His works reflect a refined analysis of his own emotions, his experiences and of the people and society around him. He dared venture into the unknown, sex and the individual, and his most representative work Half of Man is Woman (男人的一半是女人) portrays a theme often frowned upon. His profound insight into sexual awakening and agonies confronting the contemporary man and those psychological developments in his characters are superbly depicted in this middle length satirical novel.

Published in 1985, this novel has aroused much criticism, both positive and negative, from its readers. By studying into this controversial novel, this academic exercise hopes to delineate the artistic skills of the author, thereby affirming Zhang's rightful status as a fine novelist in China's literary world.