here's something almost morally wrong in having to separate art by women from art by men to give it due recognition. But the fact is that art by women is different, and the attitudes, perceptions, ideologies, and often themes and symbols that express those concerns seem to be uniquely women's concerns.

Because productions by women tend to project different images of women, as well as men, than those in traditional cinema (dominated by male filmmakers), they ultimately project a different vision of the world. So it is not only important but essential that there be screenings opportunities for these counter-traditional creators. Women are working in these mediums that so powerfully form our ideas of self but since most of their work falls outside of the mainstream, festivals like Montreal's Silence, elle's tournent! must exist.

Every festival has its high points and its low. Unfortunately for Silence, ellez tournent!, the International Festival of Women's Films and Videos, held June 5 to 15, there were too few highs and far too many lows. In just its second year, the 1986 festival was an ambitious one — perhaps too ambitious — including approximately 73 films from around the world and 33 videos from Canada and the United States. But when you find yourself late at night after a darkened, but rapidly emptying theatre, thinking about all the other things you could be doing, it seems hard to justify the idea of a women's festival. Not because women are not doing fine work in both mediums, but for some reason not much of it made it to this festival. How some of which did make it got there remains a mystery to me, as I'm sure it does to those many people who openly jeered, laughed or quietly walked out of numerous presentations.

Nine feature-length films from such diverse countries as Brazil, Sweden, West Africa, Belgium, New Zealand, Portugal, the United States, France and the German Federal Republic comprised the Public's Choice category. The prize was given to Agneta Elers Jarietem's Beyond Sorrow, Beyond Pain (Sweden). There were several excellent films in this category, particularly the festival opener, L'Heure de l'étoile by Suzana Amaral from Brazil. Amaral, who was present, is herself good subject material for a film — beginning film school at nearly 40 after having raised nine children. L'Heure de l'étoile is her first feature film which, she explains, is a parable for the situation of her own country, Brazil. Knowing that only adds to the film, it is one of the most eloquent expressions of the feminine condition I have ever seen.

Other categories were the Out of Competition (short and medium-length films), a special section of five films from Portugal (one of which was entered in the Public's Choice category), and nine films that have been shown before in a category titled 'To See and See Again.'

The Out of Competition category contained some of the best viewing of the festival including Mira Nair's India Cabaret, an India/U.S. co-production about female strippers in a nightclub outside Bombay, and the deadly double standard that envelops women in patriarchal society.

In the same section were four Canadian productions: Janis Lundman's Matinée, a rhythmic visual odyssey through a woman's morning routine; Maureen Judge's A Venerable Occasion, a hilarious half-hour most aptly described in the program as "a black-tie comedy on a most solemn event, and a satire on the preparations for a conventional marriage;" Patricia B. Rozema's Passion; A Letter in 16mm which captures the dichotomy confronting the professional "woman of the '80s" of the most remarkable, unforgettably painful productions screened at the festival is a fascinating short Ten Cents a Dance (Parallax). The film is a series of three sexual 'encounters,' none of which falls into the traditional definition of normal; the first consists of two women who proposition each other with bitterly empty promises; the second is two male homosexuals who satisfy one another in a toilet and then hurriedly exchange phone numbers, while the third is a man and a prostitute having verbal sex over the phone. The visual is static, with the subjects providing the only movement. The screen is divided into equal halves, the effect of which accentuates the emptiness and falsity of each encounter. The power of text and form working together the way they do leaves the viewer confronted with questions about all sexual encounters and the inherent distance between individuals — "What I'm saying and what you're hearing can never be the same thing."

The festival paid tribute to Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre, the original liberated couple, in a 1967 radio-Canada production, Sartre-de Beauvoir by Per Cacopardo, Madeleine Gobeil, and Claude Lanzmann (director of Shoah). It brought out the city's intellectuals and feminists in one of the largest crowds to attend a screening, though only half of that audience stayed to see Tina Horne's record of the 1986 Women's Conference. It was the largest crowd to attend a film in this festival.

The festival closed with Paule Baillargeon's Sonia that played to an overflow house and was reviewed separately; and a 28-minute film from Jeanine Gagné, Entre Temps. It was well-acted and technically successful, but I'm not sure Entre Temps expresses what it wants to do.

One of the strongest points of this festival was the number and availability of the filmmakers themselves, who so openly shared their ideas and answered questions. It made for a special atmosphere of honest exchange, maybe even of common purpose. The weakness was the organization — most Canadian and Quebecois films and videos seemed to suffer the same fate. Perhaps the 1986 Silence, ellez tournent! was just too ambitious in terms of the number of works it included. One would hope for the 1987 festival a greater effort for quality rather than quantity. Perhaps a smaller festival if necessary, but one that demonstrates more selectivity than this year's did.
Téléfilm Canada félicite tous les gagnants associés à ces productions de prix au fil des dix dernières années.

"Après la vie de Ishu Patelo", "Tyler" (1978); "Interview", "Arthur Miller on Home Ground" (1979); "Ça ne peut pas être l'hiver, on n'a même pas eu d'été" (1980); "Piwi", "Les Plouffe" (1981); "Jouer Sa Vie", "The Grey Fox" (1982); "Narcisse", "La Plante", "Bonheur d'occasion" (1983); "La femme de l'hôtel" (1984); "Le Matou", "The Big Snit", "Tony de Peltrie", "Visage Pâle", "Le Matou" (1985).