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Director's Commentary

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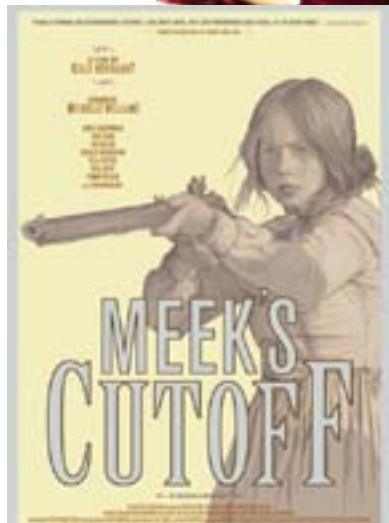
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Over the past couple of weeks, I saw four films in a row directed by women. This fact is remarkable because it happened without any intent on my part. My local movie theater, The Landmark, was showing three of them, one of which I just went to see, not knowing anything about the director, and the fourth film I saw on pay-per-view because I had missed it during the week it spent in theaters last year. The films—Miranda July's *The Future*, Kelly Reichardt's *Meek's Cutoff*, Vera Farmiga's *Higher Ground*, and Maryam Keshavarz's *Circumstance* (*Sharayet*)—were all impressive. Their accomplishment was especially notable because two of the films come from first-time directors, Farmiga and Keshavarz. Each took on difficult subjects (fundamentalist Christianity and sexuality and lesbianism in Iran, respectively) and treated them with admirable complexity and nuance. Both *The Future* and *Meek's Cutoff* required more commitment from their spectators, but each was sensational in its own way, July producing a tour-de-force on time disguised as an unassuming and very amusing slacker film about relationships, and Reichardt deftly deconstructing the western with a

minimalist narrative and stunning visuals. About the same time I was reveling in these films, the Los Angeles Times reported that, during the 2010–2011 TV broadcast season, the number of women acting, directing, and serving in other creative roles behind the camera plummeted. While the 2009–2010 season employed 29% women as writers, in 2010–2011, that number dropped to 15%. The number of women directors dropped from 16% to 11%. We find ourselves in an unusual circumstance: the future shows women as a creative force finding higher ground, while the industry offers a meek cutoff to their access. And if these puns make you groan, so should this situation!

—Kathleen McHugh

