

# About Elly

(2009)

**Asghar Farhady**

Iran



# Asghar Farhady

- Born 7 May 1972
- Internationally, critically acclaimed Iranian film director and screenwriter.
- Many awards:
  - Golden Globe Award
  - Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film for **A Separation**
- Named one of the 100 Most Influential People in the world by Time magazine in 2012.



# Filmography

		Director	Writer
	Low Heights		Yes
2003	Dancing in the Dust	Yes	Yes
2004	The Beautiful City	Yes	Yes
2006	Fireworks Wednesday	Yes	Yes
2007	Canaan		Yes
2008	Tambourine		Yes
2009	Trial on the Street		Yes
2009	About Elly	Yes	Yes
2011	A Separation	Yes	Yes
2013	The Past	Yes	Yes
2016	The Salesman	Yes	Yes

# Essentially, with a casual look . . . .

- The film is strong on narrative
- The narrative is a socio-psychological plot
- 3 Couples with 3 children  
+ 1 single man + 1 single woman (ELLY)
- Side roles: the lady renting the villa, her grandson
- And ALIREZA, the man “related” to ELLY

We can spend hours analyzing and discussing the story.

So why not read it as a novel?

Why do we watch the film?

Because the film is made up of **cinematic devices** which give it a **cinematic meaning**

- The film has a **cinematic** before its **socio-psychological meaning**
- **Cinematic Devices** cannot be placed in a Novel
- Let us look for these devices and not ask what this film is “**about**”

# 1) Reversed Imagery

- The Startup Scene: looks simple, naïve and plain fun
- The Postal Box, the Tunnel and the Freedom Shouts
- A complex relationship that pulls us forward (Speed / Light)
- Freedom Shouts and increasing imprisonment (later bars)
- Elly and the Kite
- The horrible vomit after the incident versus “Lovely Life”.
- Voting for the villa: betrayal of democratic? Exposure of gender differential?

## 2) The “WHY” Scenes or Shots

- Why the postal slot at the beginning?
- Why does the postal slot emerge as the tunnel?
- Why was the Villa not available except for one night?
- Why the end scene has a BMW stuck in the sand?
- Why are there two or three games in the villa?
- Why the sudden break into dancing? Why not later?
- Why the toilet has no lock?



# 3) The Camera + the Dialog

- **Dialog:** Tight / Very Fast / Quick Response
  - Watch the camera wind its way like a snake with the dialog
- Lots of **movement** by the 8 adults + 3 children
  - Some scenes have action with 8 or more persons involved
- The **space** of the film is clearly divided
  - Yet, the winding road from one the other is soft and smooth
- No **preference** by the camera for anyone
  - Even Elly and Sepideh
- Elly always walks on **separate paths** . . .
- Long shots versus quick splits

# 4) Visual Symbols

- **Broken Glass:**
  - Sepideh breaks the glass in the window in the villa
  - Broken glass all the time everywhere
  - Ahmad and Elly: erotic exchange of broken glass
- **Bars** on windows, the gates, the entrance
  - Even shots within cars have bars
- Watch the Landlady's son grimace as he watches AMIR dancing – Is this a class issue?

# 5) Unfolding . . . . A Tool?

- The film starts with a **lie** and continues with more . . . Why?
- **Unpredictable narrative**: no a single frame prepares you for the next
- The relationships within the couples expand . . .
- Ongoing generation of crises

## 6) Things that happen early . . . . then

- The slap on Peyman's neck in the picnic --- what happens to him at the "heart of the film"?
- The mother of Arash (the child) says: "Watch you will get wet"
- And many more still to be found

# 7) References?

- The disappearance of ELLY: *L'Aventura* by Antonioni
- The Volleyball game and the announcement by the children: *JAWS*
- The broken glass between Elly and Ahmad: the final sex scene in *A Streetcar Named Desire*