A 1998 British film discussed by the Film Group of the UCC Centerville (MA) Church

'LITTLE VOICE'

Based on the stage-play "The Rise and Fall of the Little Voice"

Lines on the video-box: "Finding your own voice can be magic." (While this could be a one-line summary of Fritz Perls' gestalt-psychiatry process, the film bears it out only in the romantic affirmation of the girl [who is "little voice"] to the boy at story's end: she's found the boy, yes, but has she yet found herself?) "An inspirational story about a painfully shy young woman and how the power of music leads her to an amazing transformaiton" from being "a hopeless introvert." ("Hopeless" only in the judgment of her mother; music [disc recordings of pop-singers whom she imitates] sustains but does not transform her: she's transformed, but only by romantic love for a telephone technician [communication icon] who comes to the apartment on business.)

Further on THE STORY: Bill, the phone-installer's assistant, falls for Elvie, the play-&-film's central character (June Horrocks, who does all her own singing: no dubbing). The story's outer world is exclusively low-class British night-life, the mother & her producer-lover (Michael Caine) are losers--till he sees exploiting Elvie's singing as a possible way of making it (he tells her mother) to "the [$] promised land." Inspired by a vision of her dead father, Elvie one night makes it big in a nightclub; & the producer sells all to promote her--but she refuses to perform again, & he's [$] ruined. Mother-&-daughter's apartment burns, & Bill uses his telephone-company's cherrypicker to rescue her. Then, in their only confrontation worthy of being called a conversation, mother accuses daughter of unresponsiveness--& Elvie replies "I never spoke to you 'cause you never listen. I could never get a word in." Last scene: Elvie at Bill's pigeon-cote, a dilapidated shack on the ocean; "Wayne," his favorite pigeon, had been injured & flew away, but has just returned (& Bill is petting him on the head)--as injuried Elvie had left what had been home (the now fire-destroyed apartment) & has come to her new home (a romantic relationship of mutual affection).

1 What's missing? God, religion, the whole world beyond the low-cost apartment & the sleazy nightclub. Birds (Bill's pigeons) are the metaphor for **transcendence**--especially appealing to me, who in 1930-2 raised pigeons (& sold the squabs [in the depth of the Great Depression] @ 50¢).

Bill courts Elvie by elevating himself, in his cherrypicker, to her bedrrom window--saying "I'm flying free. You should try it sometime, Elvie!" He means, of course, her whole being leaving the self-confinement of her one room: many times daily, in fantasy, she flies away on wings of song. On one occasion she's imitating Judy Garland as her mother & Ray (the "I'm a big noise in these parts" promoter) are having sexual intercourse downstairs. Hearing her, Ray goes to her room, sees (above her bed) the photo of her deceased father (the room's only wall-decoration), & suggests that letting him promote her would "show respect for your father" by flying out of the room into the nightclub (Ray making a flying motion with his hand). (Rightly, he thought it would make a better number than the shaking-bare-breasts shtick we'd seen him casting for.) (A histrionic: Blackout ends the sexplay downstairs, & Ray goes upstairs in her mother's dress & opens Elvie's door just as the powercomes back on--& he says "Let there be light!") Among the biblical resonances is Ps.55.6 KJV: "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then I would fly away and be at rest."....St.Francis communing with the birds led Olivier Messiaen, in preparation for his opera "Saint Francois d'Assise," to acquire from birds (on long walks, getting him up at 4am) the fresh melodies of the opera, making it lyric with gospel joy transcending earth's sins & sorrows: the composer, a deeply committed Christian, aimed at offering audiences a life-transforming, conversional experience.

2 The redeeming feature of this chaotic sleaze is the quiet, budding love between Bill & Elvie. A vision of a dead man (her father) moves her momemtarily to life, but the live man (Bill) promises a permanent *tranquillitas ordinis* (Augustine's phrase for the peace possible only within God's order--a peace human romance mimics, but overpromises, leading to disappointments & divorces).

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