KINONIK

HOBSON'S CHOICE (1954)

Directed by David Lean

WEDNESDAY April 22nd 7PM

SATURDAY April 25th 2PM / 7PM



A bootmaker's daughter decides to marry the best craftsman in the shop—whether he likes it or not. She's Maggie Hobson, thirty years old, managing her father's shop while he spends his afternoons at the pub. She watches Willie Mossop work and sees exactly what he's worth. When a wealthy customer demands to meet the bootmaker who made her shoes, Maggie knows: Willie is the finest in Lancashire, and her father's been exploiting his genius for years. So she claims him.

This is 1890s Salford, height of the Arts and Crafts movement. The ideology said: honest skilled labor, authentic craftwork, the pure tradesman working with his hands. William Morris romanticizing medieval guilds; the same framework that fed Völkisch ideas about authentic work versus degraded industrial production. Willie should be the ideal—the skilled artisan, producing beautiful things through dedication and craft. Except Maggie looks at Willie and sees capital. She borrows £100 using Willie as security ("Willie is the security"), sets up a competing shop, trains him to read and negotiate, steals her father's clients, and within a year has Laughton begging to make Willie a partner.

David Lean shoots this like a gentle comedy but it's asking: is there such a thing as authentic craft labor, or is skill just another asset to be captured and deployed? Maggie liberates Willie from her father's basement, but she does it by recognizing exactly what he's worth and taking ownership.