June 30, 2016

Linden Havemeyer Wise
Chair of the Board of Trustees
Chapin School
100 East End Ave.
New York, N.Y. 10028

Dear Ms. Wise,

As a follow-up to my previous letter about the need for educational extension schools, I think you know that the well-bred possess sophistication.

While some believe that the well-bred possess selective genetics, ideas and tastes are acquired through education and worldly experience -- usually by society’s wealthy elite.

In the Middle Ages (and earlier Proto-Indo-European society), the gentry, or the genteel well-bred, were from families with high rank who were born into a caste system. A “trifunctional hypothesis” of social class in ancient societies has been described by writer Georges Dumézil (1898-1986). A three-part social class is widely supported by modern historians and anthropologists including Smithsonian Journeys expert Terje Leiren, who is Professor of Scandinavian Studies and History at the University of Washington, Seattle. In a presentation about a 12th-Century Tapestry from Skog Church in Hälsingland, Sweden, Leiren says a grouping of three Norse gods that corresponds to the trifunctional division; Odin, the All-Father leading priests, Thor, Odin’s son, and a favored deity, leading the military, and Freyr, god of fertility and farming leading farmers and tradesmen.

While academics such as Leiren are teaching college students about Odin, Thor and Freyr, the great unwashed are wearing gym clothes and composing 140-character tweets on their smart phones.

A significant number of people want to lift their social status. One clue is audience reception to George Bernard Shaw’s *Pygmalion* and the number of remakes produced since Shaw’s play opened in 1913. Excluding stories about prostitutes who are transformed (e.g. Julia Roberts in *Pretty Woman* and Melanie Griffith in *Milk Money*), notable examples include:

- **Pygmalion (1938)**
  A 1938 British film based on the George Bernard Shaw play of the same title, and adapted by him for the screen with stars Leslie Howard and Wendy Hiller. In the story, professor of phonetics Henry Higgins makes a bet that he can train a bedraggled Cockney flower girl, Eliza Doolittle, to pass for a duchess at an ambassador’s garden party by teaching her to assume a *veneer of gentility*, the most important element of which, he believes, is impeccable speech. The film won an Oscar for Best Screenplay.

- **My Fair Lady (1956)**
  This 1956 theatrical musical is an adaption of Shaw’s *Pygmalion*. Rex Harrison played Higgins and Julie Andrews played Eliza in this Broadway musical by Lerner and Loewe. The Broadway production was a tremendous hit, and one of the longest run of any major musical theatre production in history. It was followed by a hit London production, a popular film version, and numerous revivals. The show won six Tony Awards, and received four more nominations.

- **My Fair Lady (1964)**
  A film version of the musical starring Audrey Hepburn as Eliza and Rex Harrison as Higgins. The film won eight Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Best Actor, and Best Director.

- **Trading Places (1983)**
  In this Paramount Pictures production, Eddie Murphy is a street bum who is transformed into a polished businessman. In 1983, the film finished as the fourth highest earning film of the year.
• *Educating Rita* (1983)
  In this film, Liverpool hairdresser Rita (Julie Walters), goes to English professor Frank Bryant (Michael Caine) to overcome her working-class life. In 1984, at the British Academy Film Awards, *Educating Rita* won Best Film. Caine and Walters were also nominated for Best Actor and Best Actress at the British Awards and took Best Actor and Best Actress at the Golden Globes.

• *Sabrina* (1954)
  In this film directed by Billy Wilder, Audrey Hepburn plays Sabrina Fairchild, a chauffeur’s daughter who is pursued by Humphrey Bogart as Linus Larrabee and William Holden as David Larrabee—two socialite brothers. The brothers never notice Sabrina until she attends culinary school for 2 years in Paris and returns home as an attractive and sophisticated woman.

• *Sabrina* (1995, remake)
  This 1995 adaptation of Billy Wilder’s 1954 film was directed by Sydney Pollack with stars Harrison Ford as Linus Larrabee, Julia Ormond as Sabrina and Greg Kinnear as David Larrabee.

• *The Makeover* (2013)
  In this made-for-TV movie, Julia Stiles plays a gender role-reversal as Hannah Higgins, a smart and driven education consultant who helps blue-collar Boston beer vendor Elliot Doolittle (played by David Walton) project refinement, distinction, breeding, and sophistication. Hannah takes Elliot on as a “project” and teaches him to speak like a gentleman, dress like a gentleman, and conduct himself like a gentleman.

Those who attend extension schools will need language skills mentioned in my previous letter as well as finishing school classes that focus on social graces.

Examples of modern finishing schools for men and women include:

- **Minding Manners**
  34 Buckingham Palace Road, Suite 322
  London SW1W 0RH
  England, United Kingdom
  [http://www.mindingmanners.com](http://www.mindingmanners.com)

- **The Etiquette School of New York**
  477 Madison Avenue
  New York, New York
  [http://etiquette-ny.com](http://etiquette-ny.com)

- **Please Pass the Manners**
  315 Richmond Street
  El Segundo, CA 90245
  [http://pleasepassthemanners.com](http://pleasepassthemanners.com)

Extension classes should include grooming and instructions on how to dress—taught in 3 hour classes, twice-a-month.

TeachwithMovies.org, a Web site that deals with the integration of movies and education, has a page devoted to *Pygmalion*:

[http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/pygmalion.html](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/pygmalion.html)

Sincerely,

Mary Jo Fahey