**What is successful about Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind?**

*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* was successful because it was a great gender mashup. It involved romance and science fiction. But Kauffman, the screenwriter, made it personal. He made it relevant to our times: who doesn’t want to dump all the memories of the girlfriend/boyfriend who has just left us? More importantly, Kauffman made it intimate by not choosing to paint the story on a large canvas, as typical science fiction films do. He tore the story elements down to the bare bones and then held them up in light and scrutinized them, checked their strengths and weaknesses. What genres would complement the weak areas, he asked, and came up with genres from two opposite sides of the spectrum. And he delivered. He takes familiar themes and both genres and mashed them together to create the depth and tragedy (and comedy) that get revealed in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind.*

**Name three famous remakes that are not thought of as remakes.**

*The Maltese Falcon* (1941) is a remake of *The Maltese Falcon* (1931). *The Thing* (1982) is a remake of *The Thing From Another World* (1951). *The Magnificent Seven* (1960) is a remake of *Shichinin no Samurai* aka *The Seven Samurai* (1954). Unless one knows about the history of genre and filmmaking, one wouldn’t guess that these films are remakes.

**What is the key to good genre mashing?**

The key to genre mashing is to make each genre complement the other. For example, in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, what can the science fiction and the romance genres tell us each other, especially in terms of the story? It tells us that no matter how much we want to forget about our ex-lovers, we can’t deploy science that does not respect and consider humanity: in this case, altering the brain to remove memories. This is about taking the science fiction genre to its boundaries. It is not that different from taking the science in *Jurassic Park* too far. However, in this case, the science takes place in the universe of *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*. And in this case, it propels the narration. It also tells us no matter how much we dislike our lovers, the little quirks that are in their personalities are very reason we fell in love with them for the first time. And this is about taking the romance genre to its boundaries. This isn’t too far from other romantic stories, say, in *Blue Valentine*, where the couple can’t stand each other in the relationship. However, in this case, the route the couple took to “cure” their predicament propels the narrative. Thus, by taking both genres to their boundaries, the story is enhanced and brings the audience back to the most fundamental quality of falling in love: our lovers will be in our consciousness no matter how much we try to get rid of them from our minds and brains. To make gender mashups successful, therefore, it is essential that both genres complement each other and help propel the narrative with each other.

**Come up with your own “genre-mashing” idea, and write a one page synopsis for it.**

The story will involve two genres: fantasy and mystery. And a very sensitive topic: children, their destiny and redemption. A group of pre-teen children are in the nether world and are looking up to the higher world to their parents. Their parents don’t know the circumstances of their deaths and investigate with the help of the authorities and are constantly looking for answers. Meanwhile, the children in the netherworld don’t want to be a part of that world and look for ways to get out. The backstory: coming from a single neighborhood, the children get abducted by vampires and after being bitten, die and enter the nether world of vampires.

Every night, instead of going on the prowl to look for victims, the children try to find ways to get out of this world. They do not listen to their “vampire” mentors and they do not partake in any of the activities that vampires do. They believe that if their avatars as vampires die, they’ll rise up from this nether world and regain their human form again. So, they don’t bite humans and make them vampires. They believe that this world might only be a dimension and that they have to find a way to get out of this dimension. Their journey shows them that this is impossible. They don’t age, but after many years of faith and struggle, they go to a higher world where they meet their parents. Their life with their parents resumes in this higher place.

The story will push the boundaries of fantasy: it is set in a dark, scary place, as opposed to in an optimistic place like a school (say, in *Harry Potter* movies). But at the same time, it is scary just like the *Harry Potter* movies are. In the *Harry Potter* movies, the real people could lose their lives and they do. In this story, the children have already lost their lives. They don’t know it initially and realize it only when they try to seek out their parents, that they are not visible to their parents (think of *Lovely Bones).* Their “vampire” mentors help them realize this. This world is evil, but not always by choice. According to vampire folklore, early vampires would do whatever it took to bring death to their loved ones because they missed their loved ones. New vampire folklore does not pursue such narratives. New vampire folklore revolves around gotchic castles, paganism and has sexual overtones. That’s why it sells. However, in the new folklore, all vampires become vampires involuntarily: most of them are forced in to it either by abduction, sexual attacks, or perhaps, death. Such vampires are sympathetic to children who have just entered this world and might teach them to ropes of this nether world. The story will push the fantasy boundaries in this fashion.

At the same time, it will push the mystery genre, because the audience is constantly concerned about where these children will end up. Is this the end of the road for them? No. While their journey will show that they can’t go back to being human, they will have a route: to un-become a vampire and ascend to a higher world where blood-sucking and prowling aren’t the norms in everyday life. They want to ascend to this higher world to play ball in the playground, dance to music and falls on their parents’ shoulders. And the children will find this secret, pursue it and accomplish it.

The story is similar in terms of being trapped in a system that one is born in to. Catholic priests in *Spotlight* don’t believe that they did anything wrong when they sexually abused young boys. They were sexually abused when they were young, too. It’s a vicious cycle. But the priests didn’t have the self-awareness to break out of this cycle. In pre-Civil War days, men and women born in to slavery were slaves for the rest of their lives. It’s a vicious cycle that they couldn’t escape, even if they were aware of it. To this day, men and women in India, born in to a certain caste and a certain last name, are stuck with it for the rest of their lives. Some men and women will never be allowed in to temples because of their caste and last name. These men and women revolt against the system and say, “I won’t accept this status quo”.

What if the children in this story do not want to accept the status quo of the vampire netherworld? And want to break free? What would it take for a group of children to revolt against the vampires and become human again?