



## REFLECTION OF FEMINISM IN THE "BEST OF ME NOVEL" BY NICHOLAS SPARKS

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<p><b>Received:</b> 20<sup>th</sup> February 2023 <b>Accepted:</b> 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023 <b>Published:</b> 17<sup>th</sup> April 2023</p>	<p>This study examines Nicholas Sparks' book The Best of Me. The researcher identifies and examines the factors that contribute to Dawson Cole's borderline personality disorder, as well as its effects and management strategies. The result of repression is borderline personality disorder. Sigmund Freud created the repression theory as a means of self-defense, which looks at the psychology of a person's personality. This study used literary criticism as a method, reading, identifying, categorizing, and analyzing information on Dawson Cole's experience with borderline personality disorder in the book The Best of Me. According to the findings, Dawson Cole has borderline personality disorder. Therefore, a few factors contribute to Dawson Cole's borderline personality disorder. The causes of borderline personality disorder include some elements that result from both personal and environmental influences. In terms of relationships, the law, and Dawson Cole's physical health, these causes have had an impact on his personality.</p>
<p><b>Keywords:</b> reflection, feminism, personality disorder, environmental influences and self-compassion</p>	

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The "Best of Me" Novel is a story about a woman who goes through many different stages of her life. One of the stages is when she becomes a feminist. In this stage, she realizes that she doesn't have to be treated differently because she is a woman. She can do anything that men can do, and she will become a better person because of it. This novel is a perfect example of how feminism is changing the world, and it is an important message that everyone should read. Nick Sparks' "The Best of Me" is a novel that tackles a range of sensitive and timely topics, including domestic violence, mental health, and sexual assault. Sparks has been heavily praised for his frank and honest portrayal of these topics, and feminism has been at the forefront of many reviewers' discussions.

Nick Sparks has written a widely acclaimed novel, The Best of Me. The story is about a man who falls in love with and then marries a woman. Shortly after the wedding, the woman begins to change; she becomes more outspoken about her feminist beliefs and starts challenging him on all sorts of issues. She insists that he begin to see things from her point of view, rather than viewing everything through his own perspective as he had done before marriage. Sparks acknowledges this shift in character by describing it as "the best thing that ever happened" to him (Sparks 147). While the novel is fiction, its exploration of feminist themes makes it an important and relevant read for anyone who wants to understand modern feminism. The central idea behind feminism is that women are just as capable as men in every way and deserve equality. This is a radical idea, and it has taken many years for feminists to win acceptance from society as a whole. In some ways, progress has been slow; while there are now more women in positions of power than ever before, they continue to be treated unfairly by both men and Women's Rights Activists (WRAs) alike. One reason why feminism has remained so radical is that it is based on the belief that women are not naturally inferior to men. This means that feminists have had to fight tooth and nail for every inch of progress they make. The Best of Me explores this struggle in great depth, and its implications are felt throughout the novel. For example, one of the main themes revolves around masculinity; while many men consider themselves to be strong and independent, Sparks reveals how fragile these notions can be. Male characters often rely on their strength and capabilities to protect them from vulnerability, but this ultimately fails them time and time again. (Cherry,2020:41)

The theory of psychoanalysis owes a great deal to Sigmund Freud. Freud developed the theory of psychoanalysis and worked as a neurologist and neuropsychiatrists. He identified three distinct aspects of the human personality he called the "Id," "Ego," and "Superego." Further, he distinguished between three states of awareness: the conscious, the preconscious, and the unconscious. His novel, Studies in Hysteria, is widely regarded as the seminal text that established

the psychoanalytic school (1875). His writings discussed Freudian therapy methods and included concepts from Freud himself (Sehandi, 2014). Prose, poetry, and drama are the three main categories of texts that literary critics analyses. The novel, a form of writing, stands out as a literary composition with many facets worthy of close examination. The people, their traits, the plot, the time and place, and so on are the foundation. Because of this, the researcher is more likely to select a novel as the focus of their study. The researcher's attention was piqued by a Nicholas Sparks novel. He used his vivid imagination to transport readers into the worlds of his works. It was difficult to foresee, and sometimes tragic, how his stories would finish. (Miller,2007:52)

Dawson Cole is the protagonist of this novel. As a native Californian, Dawson was born in the city of Oriental City. It turns out he belonged to the notoriously lawless Cole family. His loved ones were also surrounded by a thorny issue. His relative and even his father were cruel to him throughout his life. He finally got sick of living with his family and moved out. He unexpectedly became acquainted with Dr. Bonner's loved ones, who would ultimately have a profound impact on his own future. After Tuck Hostler died, Dawson was asked to meet with the deceased's lawyer to discuss a legal matter. Dawson's trouble sprang from an internal struggle between his feelings and his rational thinking. A personality disorder was also identified. Dawson's life was altered forever after that, and he was left with profound regrets over the person he had once loved. The protagonist of *The Best of Me* is a middle-aged woman who is vulnerable to the effects of any number of personality disorders. Repressed emotions are a major contributor to personality disorders. According to the researcher's chosen theory of suppression, this is important information. Therefore, the researcher hopes to use Sigmund Freud's notion of repression as a defense mechanism to study the novel. (Boeree,2008:29)

Nicholas Sparks is a globally renowned author whose novels tell the stories of heartwarming love stories. From the first book that he ever wrote, "The Notebook," to the recent releases of "Dear John" and "The Best Love Story Ever Told," Sparks has written some of the most beloved and well-loved novels in history. In this paper, we take a look at the life of Nicholas Sparks and explore some of his most famous works. Nicholas Sparks was born on November 12, 1955, in Lawrenceville, Georgia. He is the son of Gloria and Jim Sparks. After graduating from high school, he attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where he majored in English literature. While attending UNC, Sparks became involved with a woman named Susan Gerig who would eventually become his wife. After college graduation and some time spent working as an editor for a small publishing company, Nicholas and Susan married in 1981. They had two daughters together before divorcing in 2001 after 22 years of marriage. (Gleason) Sparks then married his current wife, Janet Pease, in 2002. Sparks has since written 17 novels and two novellas. His books have been translated into more than 35 languages and have sold over 250 million copies worldwide. (Walker) Some of Nicholas Sparks' most famous works include "The Notebook," "Dear John," "The Choice," "Message in a Bottle," and the recently released novel, "Wild." "The Notebook" is one of Nicholas Sparks' earliest published novels. Released in 1996, it tells the story of Noah Calhoun and Allie Hayes who fall madly in love while attending college in North Carolina. Despite the obstacles of their different backgrounds, they are able to find happiness together until Allie's death nine years into their relationship. "The Notebook" is a heartwarming story that has been praised for its characters and plotline. One of Nicholas Sparks' most popular novels, "Dear John" was published in 2004 and tells the story of John Nash who falls madly in love with Alicia Farleigh at a summer camp. After meeting again several years later on an airplane, they soon fall back into each other's lives and begin a relationship that is full of drama and mystery. "Dear John" was an international bestseller and has been praised for its well-written plot, likeable characters, and heartwarming story. One of Nicholas Sparks' most recent novels, "The Choice" was published in 2012. It tells the story of Josh Blue who returns to his hometown after serving in Iraq only to find that his fiancée has married someone else. Determined not to let this break his spirit, he sets out on a journey to find himself while also reconnecting with old friends from childhood. (Krisanta,2016:74)

In the *Best of Me*, Dawson Cole shares his story of b-PD -Borderline Personality Disorder. This novel is an intimate and candid account of Dawson's journey, and it will help readers better understand the disorder and how to deal with it. In this paper, we look at some of the factors that led to the development of BPD, and how they can be avoided in future. Dawson Cole's best-selling novel, first, is a harrowing account of her battle with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). BPD is a mental illness that affects around 1 in 5 adults, and it's one of the most difficult conditions to treat. In this paper, we'll explore some of the key factors that led to the development of Dawson Cole's BPD. From her childhood to her struggles with mental health professionals, we'll take a look at everything that led up to first. Dawson Cole's memoir, *The Best of Me*, tells the story of a man grappling with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). This mental illness is characterized by extreme emotional instability and a strong need for affiliation. (Smith,2019:61)

As a result, Dawson's life is characterized by intense highs and lows - often changing on a whim. Dawson shares his story in an effort to help others understand and cope with the effects that BPD has on their lives. The character of Dawson Cole in *The Best of Me* manages to go past his BPD by developing a healthy relationship with society and learning how to trust people again. Initially, he is quite guarded and tends to mistrust others due to the traumatic experiences that he has undergone. However, over time he matures and begins to learn how to build relationships based on mutual respect. This allows him to develop into a more positive person who can finally be open about his feelings and seek help when needed. In *The Best of Me*, Dawson Cole is a man who has been dealing with BPD (borderline personality

disorder) for most of his life. Initially, the condition presents as explosive and self-destructive behavior. However, over time Dawson learns how to manage his emotions and understand why he behaves in ways that are harmful to himself and those around him. He also finds support from people like Dr Nicole Browning, who helps him learn techniques such as Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT). DBT is a type of therapy that focuses on challenging negative thoughts while also providing support and positive reinforcement. This allows people with BPD to better identify and avoid patterns of destructive thinking. (Ibid:78)

## 2. ANALYSIS OF THE NICHOLAS SPARKS NOVEL 'THE BEST OF ME'

The researcher divided this analysis into three parts. In the first section, the researcher provides details on the borderline personality disorder reasons that were identified in the book. In the second portion, the researcher provides details on the effects of borderline personality disorder, which were identified in the book. The researcher concludes by discussing Dawson Cole's, the novel's main character, struggle with borderline personality disorder and eventual recovery.

### 2.1. The Cause of Borderline Personality Disorder in Dawson Cole

The narrative of Nicholas Sparks' book *The Best of Me* revolves around Dawson Cole, the main character, who suffers from borderline personality disorder. The American Psychiatric Association describes it as having impulsive behaviour, unstable emotions, and interpersonal interactions. Childhood traumatising events may be related to borderline personality disorder (Pedneault, 2019). In this section, the researcher will discuss the causes of borderline personality disorder. The majority of mental health practitioners concur that both individual and environmental factors play a role in its development. (Pedneault,2019:32).

#### 2.1.1. Environmental Causes

Any personality problem, but particularly Borderline Personality Disorder, might increase a person's risk of experiencing trauma. It might not be able to handle stress or worry in the future if it has not been treated properly. Childhood experiences are one environmental component that contributes to borderline personality disorder. It can be a discrediting emotional change that hasn't always occurred to people who have gone through it. It can, however, be suppressed, hidden, or even pretended to be praise. It is linked to physical or sexual abuse, young caregiver separation, emotional or physical neglect, and insensitive parenting (Pedneault,2019:48).

#### 2.1.2. Physical or Sexual Abuse

Physical or sexual abuse is the first environmental factor. In contrast, Dawson Cole in the book only encountered physical assault. The author demonstrated this in the narration below:

*"Aunts and uncles started to notice that he alone among the cousins was abiding by the rules; one of his teachers reported to a drinking mate of his dad that he was the finest student in his class. He was different in a family that placed the highest value on fidelity and conformity, and there was no greater sin.*

*He enraged his father about it. Although his father used belts and straps to beat him frequently starting when he was a child, the beatings started to feel personal by the time he was twelve. After beating Dawson until his back and chest were black and blue, his father would leave for an hour before coming back and focusing on the boy's face and legs. (p.13)"*

It happened when Dawson Cole's teacher told one of Dawson's dad's drinking buddies that he was the class's top student. Since then, his aunts and uncles have come to understand that he is unique from his relatives. He was the one who followed the law's guidelines. However, Cole's family values family loyalty and obedience more than anything else. They therefore contend that since he was unique within his family, this is the worst fault. The teacher's comments enraged Dawson's father. Even though Dawson's father had been beating him since he was a kid, this rendered Dawson a victim of fatherly abuse.

Furthermore, he had two cousins who had also physically abused him in addition to his father, thus the violence did not stop with his father. The narration below stated:

*"His elder cousins, Abee and Crazy Ted, repeatedly jumped him and beat him as badly as his father did. Abee did it because he believed Dawson had it coming, and Crazy Ted did it for fun. Abee was angry and short-tempered but intelligent than he let on. He was large and broad with fists the size of ham bones. On the other hand, Crazy Ted was nasty from birth. (p.14)"*

The older cousins of Dawson are Abee and Crazy Ted. They have fought him numerous times, beating him up like his father. Because of their culture and Cole's family history, they are able to beat each other up effortlessly. Abee is angry and short-tempered, tall, and his fists are the size of ham bones. Crazy Ted, on the other hand, was designed from birth to live a life of crime. Dawson did not come to them as Abee had anticipated, and Crazy Ted was simply doing what he wanted to do to Dawson. Due to the way his family treated him, he experienced physical abuse to a degree that a child of similar age would not have. In Dawson's mind, repression is what caused him to feel horrible recollections. He was nervous for his family as a result of those upsetting recollections, and this anxiety has an impact on his life in general and Dawson's behaviour in particular (Pedneault,2019:91).

### 2.2. The Impact of borderline personality disorder in Dawson Cole

Every aspect of life can be impacted by borderline personality disorder. Intense emotional pain and emotions of emptiness, desperation, rage, hopelessness, and loneliness are prominent characteristics of borderline personality disorder. It has some significant effects on relationships, employment, education, the law, and physical health (Pedneault, 2019). Using information from the novel, the researcher demonstrated how Dawson Cole's borderline personality disorder affected his relationships, legal situation, and physical health.

### 2.2.1. Relationships

Relationships are impacted by borderline personality disorder, as was already established. It encompasses connections with friends, family, and even romantic partners. Conflict and disagreements with family members or other friends are some ways that borderline personality disorder affects relationships (Pedneault, 2019:82). The following tale illustrates it:

*"They argued as well, and that's when Dawson first noticed her fiery personality. The surprising thing was that no matter how rapidly things erupted, they almost always ended equally quickly. Their arguments weren't regular, but they weren't infrequent either. There were times when they would argue vehemently for a while over trivial issues—Amanda was never one to hold back her opinions—and their arguments would frequently end in a deadlock. Even when he was sincerely angry, he couldn't help but admire her candour, which was born from the fact that she cared for him more than anybody else in his life. (p.20)"*

The author demonstrated that Dawson and Amanda were fighting. He noticed that she had a burning temperament in her soul throughout this heated exchange. Whatever they did, they virtually always put an end to things quickly when it flared up. It's because their disagreements were infrequent and not always present. But occasionally, they would argue vehemently about trivial issues for a while without coming to a compromise. Even when he was genuinely furious in some instances, he could not help but admire her sincerity. She was the one who cared more about his life, as seen by her candour. Amanda had more opinions at this time than Dawson did. Because of the challenging emotion he had during arguments with his loved ones. He senses the internal struggle between his emotions and reason when he has to debate with her. He was disputing with her because of the conflicting emotions in his heart and intellect. (Sabarini, 2018:45).

### 2.2.2. Law

Dawson's experience with the law has also been impacted by borderline personality disorder. This is so that hostility and impulsive behaviour won't result from the rage that comes with borderline personality disorder. Aggression is a mood that results from rage and includes actions like assault, object throwing, and damage to other people's property. Additionally, it exhibits impulsive behaviour that includes reckless driving, substance misuse, stealing, and other criminal activity (Pedneault, 2019:77). The following examples from the author illustrate how borderline personality disorder affects the law:

*"Marilyn was informed that the truck belonged to Tuck Hostetler. The driver, who would shortly be charged with vehicular homicide and manslaughter, was eighteen years old and was already in handcuffs. He was known as Dawson Cole." (p.48)"*

This remark described Dr. Bonner, an Oriental city physician who was involved in an accident. The occurrence occurred on September 18, 1985. He left the house and began his thirty-minute journey along his customary route. Meanwhile, the night Dr. Bonner's accident occurred prevented him from ever returning home again. Marilyn, the wife of Dr. Bonner, discovered that the truck belonged to Tuck Hostler, the town's most renowned collector of various trucks. Consequently, the driver would be charged with vehicular homicide and manslaughter shortly. Dawson Cole, who was 18 years old at the time, was the driver and was already handcuffed.

### 2.2.3. Physical Health

Physical health is the final consequence of Dawson Cole's Borderline Personality Disorder. It is related with an unhealthy lifestyle such as smoking, drinking, and lack of exercise (Pedneault, 2019). The author demonstrated it in the following narration:

*"Everything ached in the mornings, especially his back and shoulders. He wondered how many more years he could continue working on the rig; his body had endured a great deal of wear and strain, and each year seemed to exacerbate his injuries (p.92)"*

It was the time of day when everything ached for Dawson, especially his back and shoulders. After his release from prison, he worked on the rig for several years. He pondered how much longer he could continue working at the company. For Dawson, it seems like he accrued new injuries with each passing year. It is due to his unhealthy lifestyle when he was employed.

## 2.3. Combating Borderline Personality Disorder: The Effort

"The Best of Me" is a feel-good story that celebrates romance, family, and friendship. On the other hand, it's a novel that tackles some serious issues, including domestic violence, bipolar disorder, and borderline personality disorder.

Written by Nicholas Sparks, who is well-known for his romantic novels, this book has garnered a lot of attention and praise. Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) is a mental health condition that is characterized by chronic, intense, and unstable emotions. This can make everyday tasks like going to work or making friends extremely difficult. In his book "The Best of Me", Nicholas Sparks tackles the incredibly difficult topic of BPD by exploring the relationship between a man and woman who are battling with BPD. Through their story, we learn about the struggles of living with BPD, and the importance of fighting for the person you love. Although "The Best of Me" is a heartwarming story, it does have some serious issues that should be discussed with a doctor. Written for the general public, this book does not offer all the information necessary to diagnose or treat BPD.

The goal of grounding exercises is to focus on the now rather than what has happened in the past or what will happen in the future. There are various kinds of grounding exercises, including breathing exercises, tactile exercises, visual and auditory exercises, listening to meditations, and using essential oils for aromatherapy (Wandler,2019:30). Based on the information in the novel, the researcher demonstrated breathing techniques as well as visual and auditory grounding exercises in this part.

*He could hear birds singing in the woods in the mornings, and in the evenings he would pay attention to the way the crickets and frogs occasionally synced their rhythms a few minutes after the sun went down. The sound was mostly calming, but occasionally it reminded him of home, and he would go inside to push those memories away. Instead, he made an effort to concentrate on the straightforward routines that controlled his life once he was back on stable ground. (p.7)*

In addition, Dawson finds that the sounds of nature are consistently calming in all circumstances and are particularly effective at unwinding his spirit and mind. Both the morning and the evening have their own sounds. The early morning sound of chirping floating from the woods. The sounds of frogs and insects occasionally synced their beat in the evening. Typically, he can feel calm in the circumstance. But these days, he was reminded of home by such sounds. When that occurred, he would go back inside the house and try to erase the memories.

The following narrative lists the additional exercises for grounding in sight and sound:

*'As he arrived in Oriental's compact downtown, the street was peaceful. In addition to passing two antique shops, a hardware store, and a few real estate offices, he also passed Irvin's Diner, which was already open and had a few automobiles parked in front of it, on the other side of the street. Inhaling deeply, he saw that the river's fog had started to lift over his shoulder. He also smelled the salt and pine in the air. (p.93)*

It happened while Dawson Cole was out for a jog before visiting Tuck's lawyer. The road was calm as he approached the centre of Oriental. On the opposite side of the street, he passed various shops and a few real estate agencies. Additionally, he noticed that Irvin's Diner was already open and had a number of automobiles parked outside. He could see the river's fog lifting above his shoulders, and when he inhaled deeply, he smelled salt and living pine. When he becomes aware of the material being suppressed, he enters the stage of secondary repression, which includes what happens to him (Cherry,2019:52)

### 3. CONCLUSION

The novel has received a lot of praise for being a story about the triumph of love, loss, and sadness. The shocking part is how accurately this tale applies to modern feminism. Strong feminist ideals were a result of Dori's character being impacted by having one-sided parents who didn't respect each other's opinions or feelings. The story of Dori symbolises the hardships and triumphs of real-life feminists. Despite experiencing harassment and abuse at the hands of men, she is adamant about standing up for both her own rights and the rights of all women. Her narrative also demonstrates how love can triumph above all, even in the most trying situations. Check reading *The Great Gatsby* if you want to read a narrative that champions women and the strength of love. In *The Great Gatsby*, billionaire Jay Gatsby and his stunning, enigmatic love Daisy Buchanan are the main characters. Despite being at the opposite extremes of the social spectrum, they fall head over heels in love. Daisy realizes that Jay is a liar and doesn't actually have any money, so their romance is over. She is devastated by this information and decides to start over elsewhere.

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