



## Dominance

*Will Lavender*

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# Dominance

Will Lavender

**Dominance** Will Lavender  
**THE PROCEDURE HAS BEGUN . . .**

**Fifteen years earlier.** Jasper College is buzzing with the news that famed literature professor Richard Aldiss will be teaching a special night class called Unraveling a Literary Mystery—from a video feed in his prison cell. In 1982, Aldiss was convicted of the murders of two female grad students; the women were killed with axe blows and their bodies decorated with the novels of notoriously reclusive author Paul Fallows. Even the most obsessive Fallows scholars have never seen him. He is like a ghost. Aldiss entreats the students of his night class to solve the Fallows riddle once and for all. The author's two published novels, *The Coil* and *The Golden Silence*, are considered maps to finding Fallows's true identity. And the only way in is to master them through a game called the Procedure. You may not know when the game has begun, but when you receive an invitation to play, it is an invitation to join the elite ranks of Fallows scholars. Failure, in these circles, is a fate worse than death. Soon, members of the night class will be invited to play along . . .

**Present day.** Harvard professor Alex Shipley made her name as a member of Aldiss's night class. She not only exposed the truth of Paul Fallows's identity, but in the process uncovered information that acquitted Aldiss of the heinous 1982 crimes. But when one of her fellow night class alums is murdered—the body chopped up with an axe and surrounded by Fallows novels—can she use what she knows about Fallows and the Procedure to stop a killer before each of her former classmates is picked off, one by one?

## Dominance Details

Date : Published July 5th 2011 by Simon & Schuster (first published 2011)

ISBN : 9781451617290

Author : Will Lavender

Format : Hardcover 368 pages

Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Thriller, Suspense

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## From Reader Review Dominance for online ebook

### Cheryl says

The year is 1994.

Jasper College is about to embark on a new course. It is titled “Unraveling a Literary Mystery” The class will be talk via television by convicted murderer, Dr. Richard Aldiss. Dr. Aldiss’s inspiration was recluse author, Paul Fallows. Followers of Fallows’s work would play a game called “The Procedure”. You were special if you were invited to play. The rules of the game are simple...Try and uncover the true identity of Mr. Fallows through his work. If you do than you are in the top elite few that have solved this great mystery but if you don’t than you should hope for death.

Present day.

Alex Shipley was one of Dr. Aldiss’s students. Now, it seems that someone is still playing the game only the person is playing for keeps. Two people have already been killed, who attended Dr. Aldiss’s class. It is up to Alex to find out who among the remaining former students is the killer.

I can remember reading Mr. Lavender’s debut novel, Obedience and saying, “Ok, this is an author to keep me eyes on”. I was right. Mr. Lavender’s newest book, Dominance is out of this world rockin! This book reminded me of the classic, board game Clue. Which I loved by the way...Mr. Plum in the library with a candle stick. From the first page until the last page, I was hooked. The past story line just help to add to the present. If it was not for Alex, Dr. Aldiss and a great story line, this would have fallen flat. Most of the other characters, while secondary were flat and boring. The ending was one of the best. I yelled when I read the ending. Mr. Lavender can not leave me hanging like this. There are a few “ghost writer” authors that I have read that I have tried to uncover their identity but I have never tried to discover who they were from their books like the students did for Paul Fallows. I just may have to start my own Procedure game.

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### Tony says

Lavender, Will. DOMINANCE. (2011). \*\*.

This is a strange book. It might be termed a biblio-mystery or a biblio-thriller. It takes deconstruction of a novel to its ultimate limit. If you took “Silence of the Lambs,” “Ten Little Indians,” and “Psycho” and put them into a bag and mixed them all up, you might arrive at this novel – the second from this author. The action is divided into two time periods: fifteen-years ago, and the present day. The tale is narrated by Alex, currently a professor at Harvard, but one of the participants in a fateful course given in the past by one of her alma mater’s most famous professors. She was one of nine honor students invited to attend a seminar given by Professor Aldiss, a brilliant scholar and an expert on the novels of Paul Fallows, a writer who had his roots in Iowa, but had never been seen or interviewed by the academic society or critics. Aldiss was giving his seminar on Fallows from prison via closed circuit TV hook-ups. He had been convicted of killing two young girls – college students – and then arranging their bodies in a ritual manner. During this seminar, Alex became convinced that Aldiss was innocent, and did all she could to find evidence that he was not a murderer. She was successful, but now Aldiss was back at the college in Vermont and the nine students were assembled to attend a memorial of one of their classmates. Soon, the students were being murdered, one-by-

one, in a manner similar to the first two girls. The driving force was a program called "The Procedure," where the students were encouraged to enter the novels of Fallows and assume roles of his characters. Soon, the students – actually, any participant in this game – lost touch with reality and became the characters from the novels. It is remarkably confusing as you progress through this novel. The framework of a story is certainly there, but there is no underlying reason for any of it to happen. It's just what came out of that mixed bag of successful novels that the author came up with. What one ends up with is a teen thriller like those movies where a group of girls go off to a cabin in the woods for an adventure and find that they are threatened by some unknown evil force. This is obviously not my cup of tea.

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### **Jim says**

There is a skit on Saturday Night Live, a spoof of Miley Cyrus's acting ability, where the faux Cyrus looks at the camera and says in the midst of an intense scene, "Wow this is really dramatic, I mean like this is really emotional and stuff!" In Will Lavender's impressive, yet overly back cover blurbed Dominance, the writer seems to stumble slightly into the same narrative mode. The well plotted novel tells the story of a college class taught from prison in 1994 by a former professor convicted of the slayings of two coeds. And flashes forward to present day where the professor is exonerated thanks to a student's efforts. At times it feels there is a little too much telling and not so much showing, "Wow these murders are gruesome, Wow we're in a puzzle, We are so being toyed with and stuff". Even the novel's centerpiece, the first two murders, in which the victim's blood is used to make a Rorschach on the wall, seem to happen off stage, making the crime scene's gruesome quotient come off as a little vanilla to a reader familiar with exotic deaths on CSI or the Red John smiley face in victim's blood trope on The Mentalist. A great lapse in a novel that features only an axe as its front cover art, albeit one made of books. Then there is the constant shifting between present day and 1994. Each of these shifts comes with a facing blank page, title page, then another blank page.

Phenomenologically this aims to create tension or a page turner effect, but after about ten times it creates dissonance and annoyance instead of the narrative's dominance. A simple "1994" or "Present Day" printed under each chapter heading would be sufficient and less insulting to the reader's intelligence in a novel that presents itself as a puzzle.. Still with all these distractions, the novel is engaging and interesting, especially about half way in. And seriously, I liked it, but I wanted to LOVE it after the back jacket hype. Lavender does hook the reader and Dominance's epiphanic final twist on the terminal page is very satisfying.

Lavender's conceit is original and particularly enjoyable is his Salinger-esque Paul Fallows plot. In the end, I will happily read Lavender's next book where I believe he will really exert his obvious talents.

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### **Glenda Christianson says**

Dominance by Will Lavender ISBN:978-4516-1729-0  
Advance review : coming in July 2011 from Simon & Schuster

My advance copy came by UPS in the middle of a snow storm. The poor UPS driver got stuck in our driveway and had to be towed! It worth all the trouble to get this book into my hands...

Dominance is a "who dun it" murder mystery. Complete with a cast of interesting characters called together in an old mansion. That is where the comparison to the formula murder mystery ends. This book is a quick paced easy read with unexpected plot twists. Just when you think you have it all figured out, the author reveals information that changes everything!

The book bounces between present day and 1994 when the cast of characters were in undergraduate school and part a unique class. I have to admit that I kept getting the students in the class confused. Just about the time I was reaching frustration, Will Lavender thoughtfully included a summary of all the students in chapter 18!

After reaching the end of this book I have the urge to re-read the whole book now that I know "Who Dun It". I never did have it all figured out. I think it would be an entirely different read know the ending! I loved that this book kept me guessing to the very end. That is the mark of a great mystery! I am looking forward to the next Will Lavender book.

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### **Angie Boyter says**

In Dominance, brilliant literature professor Dr. Richard Aldiss arranges to teach a televised class from a prison cell where he is serving consecutive life sentences for the brutal murders of two graduate students. Aldiss challenges the nine top English majors at Jasper College to unravel a literary mystery, the identity of pseudonymous author Paul Fallows. During the course, Alex Shipley assures her academic future by uncovering not only Fallows' identity but also information that clears Aldiss of the murders. Years later one of the former class members is murdered in a manner very similar to the grad students' killings, and Alex is again involved in the search for a killer.

Will Lavender really knows how to set up intriguing puzzles and establish an atmosphere of suspense. There are four mysteries in Dominance. Who is Paul Fallows? Who killed the two graduate students? Who killed Alex's former classmate? And was the death of another former classmate several years earlier really a suicide? I was thoroughly drawn into Alex's investigations.

Notwithstanding a fascinating yarn, I cannot recommend Dominance. There are problems with details and plot plausibility so numerous that I will not list them all. As an example, Alex and Keller are in a car, and the book says Alex pulled into a driveway. In the next sentence Keller parks the car. Did they switch drivers in between? Lewis Prine is described as a psychiatrist in one place and a psychologist in another. On one page it says that Dean Rice has never visited Aldiss, and on the next page it says the house has changed since the last time he was there. On the level of situational implausibilities, the police detective comes running into the middle of a memorial service for a murder victim to announce there has been another murder & to clear the room. There is no suggestion that the people at the service are in immediate danger, and I do think even the most zealous police office would have waited until Alex finished her eulogy! Alex and Keller have a conversation inside Keller's room while Frank is being murdered outside the bedroom door, apparently without hearing any noise from the violent encounter. The Jasper students are supposedly the smartest, most competitive of Jasper's senior English majors. Fallows only published two books, but apparently none of the students reads the second book or, at least, notes the striking fact that the second book is about someone who is an impersonator. It is almost the end of the semester before Keller mentions to Alex that he has read the second book and announces dramatically that this detail might be significant. Students in a group like this would probably all have read these two books before the first week was over and be clamoring to discuss the meaning of the second book's theme. Perhaps worst of all, it becomes clear at the end of the book that Aldiss had information that could have cleared him without the very uncertain & elaborate scheme of a night class

in which he hoped a student would discover very tenuous clues and follow the trail to the same end. He did not need that class. No matter how much this strange man liked to play games, I cannot believe he did not DISlike being in prison even more. I could go on with the examples, but you get my drift....

Despite the many small and large flaws that kept annoying me, I did want to continue to read to find the solution to the many puzzles, so if you can completely suspend your critical and analytical thinking when you read an exciting book, then you will probably enjoy Dominance. If not, you are better off looking elsewhere for your summer read.

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### **Jill Hutchinson says**

About 30 pages into this book, I began to think, "what is going on here?". Now that I have completed it, I am still asking that question.

Let me set the scenario: Richard Aldiss, a brilliant professor of literature at a small exclusive university, is arrested and given a life sentence for the axe murders of two graduate students. He hints that he knows who actually killed the students but only gives elusive and meaningless clues to the police who have no idea what he is talking about (nor does the reader). One of the professor's areas of compelling interest is discovering the identity of a best selling writer who has become a cult figure with serious students of literature. When he finally is allowed to teach a course from prison on this mysterious author to a small select group of highly intelligent students, he begins to drop hints to them as to the possible connection between that author and the murders. He challenges them to decipher his meanings and allusions that can be found in the author's writings.

The story timeline moves between the televised course being given by Professor Aldiss and the present day (15 years later) when the remaining members of the students are reuniting at the university for a memorial service for one of the original group. And the murders begin again. By the way, the professor is out of prison, exonerated of the axe murders and living nearby. Why is he free, what happened in those 15 years that changed the complexion of the case, and what the hell is going on?

This is one of the strangest books I have ever read and even the denouement on the last two pages leaves the reader confused and wondering how many murderers there really are and who they really are. A frustrating read that left me wondering if I had somehow missed the point, if there was a point.

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### **Alison says**

I'm not even finished, but my eyes are starting to hurt from all the rolling. This book requires a suspension of disbelief so strong that I can't sustain it for more than a couple sentences. We are to believe that nine undergraduate students consider themselves "scholars" on a mysterious modernist author (though his purported age—the professor feels the need to put to rest any speculation that he is the author—puts him firmly among the postmodernists). We are to believe that they are "the best of the best" but their actions in both the present day and the earlier timeline demonstrate no particular scholarly aptitude or impressive talent. We are to believe that the students' game, called The Procedure, is dark, intense, meaningful—deadly even—when in practice it comes off as an embarrassing overdramatization. We are to believe that a police detective would bring an English professor to a crime scene to ask for her expertise, and we are to believe

that same detective would gather a group of suspects together to leer at the latest victim, crime scene and evidence be damned. We are to believe that the students are brought together by an enigmatic, Lecterian professor who is teaching via live video feed from prison after being convicted of murdering two students at his previous university. And we are to believe that they, by unraveling two works of literature, can learn who really killed those two students, and bring freedom to their fearless leader. Not through police investigation, the absence of which is the true mystery of this novel. Not even through following a believable paper trail through the academic and publishing world to discover the author's true identity. But through *literary deconstruction*.

It is a unique premise, and one that utterly fails in practice. The author can only tell us so much, without offering any evidence, before we realize that he doesn't have the skill to back up all the supposed brilliance that he writes about. It's a house of cards, each character, each premise a hollow, fragile façade waiting for the slightest draft of skepticism to topple the whole affair.

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### **Carmen says**

Ok The first part of this book is good. The second part of this book is good. The last part is like a wild river raft ride. You just get slammed and drenched and slammed and drenched. It is that incredibly good. All I can say is wow. Got this from the giveaways and boy am I glad.

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### **Valerie says**

Ik weet niet hoe Will Lavender het doet, maar hij bezorgt mij de kriebels. Het verhaal trekt zich in je op en je wordt er deel van. Zo ook zijn personages die hij gebruikt.

Ik vond zijn andere boek, Het verborgen raadsel, ook al verdomd goed. Ik zat echt tot de laatste pagina met vragen en spanning. Het einde was daar echt totaal verrast.

In dit boek is de schrijfstijl hetzelfde maar een andere verhaallijn. Het wordt al duidelijk dat er een spelletje wordt gespeeld maar is het tot de laatste pagina onduidelijk waar het spel vandaan komt, wie meespelen, wat er gaande is en waarom het gespeeld is. Will Lavender is zelf ook docent geweest en daardoor weet hij heel goed de manier van les geven te beschrijven, maar ook het studentenleven en hoe studenten om kunnen gaan met colleges.

Will maakt gebruik van korte hoofdstukken die steeds afwisselen tussen het heden en 1994. Elk hoofdstuk eindigt met een vraag of raadsel die pas verder gaat in het volgende hoofdstuk van hetzelfde tijdperk. Dit alleen al is knap neergezet.

We volgen Alex die in 1994 een mysterieus college heeft gevolgd van Aldiss, 15 jaar later is ze er opnieuw mee geconfronteerd en beleeft zij eigenlijk het college opnieuw.

Van het eerste boek zei ik nog: ik wil ook wel zo'n bijzondere manier van college geven gehad hebben. Maar bij dit boek denk ik, nee dankje. Een gemeen spelletje, maar wel keurig neergezet.

Maar die laatste pagina is echt niet leuk! Zo kun je het verhaal niet eindigen, ook al eindigt het met een open einde. Maar hierdoor zorgt Will er wel voor dat de lezer er mee bezig blijft.

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## **Jackie says**

Will Lavender is inventing his own genre--"puzzle thrillers", which his website describes as "novels that are not quite mysteries and not quite thrillers but incorporate elements of both". Whatever else they may be, they are tantalizing reads to a mystery buff and book lover such as myself.

"Dominance" jumps back and forth between 1994 and the present day, following nine very special literature students and their highly controversial professor. The students were handpicked and Richard Aldiss, the professor, was teaching via a video feed from prison, where he was serving a sentence for the murder of two grad students in the last class he taught. He's an expert in an elusive author, Paul Fellows, who is a mystery in and of himself as he had only written two (possibly three) books of cultishly fascinating literature. This new class was charged with solving the literary mystery of just who this author was. To do so, they had to learn to play The Procedure, developed from Fellow's book, and cryptically mysterious. Startling things happen during the course of the class, making one student very famous in the literary world.

Flash forward to the present day when the class is called together because of the suicide (or was it?) of one of their own. Strange things begin as the old friends meet each other again, and begin to die one by one.

This is a gloriously frustrating book to puzzle through as you are given clues from two different mysteries nearly two decades apart but very much having to do with each other. The deeper into the book you get, the faster the clues come until there is just NO way you can put it down until the last page is turned. And even then...well, read it and see.

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## **Eve says**

When I first read the summary of Dominance by Will Lavender, I immediately wanted it. A literary mystery, phantom authors, novels as riddles – what could be more exciting?

Unfortunately, Dominance fell short of its unique premise. I'm not sure if my expectations were too high but I think Dominance had all the elements to make it a great thriller yet for a multitude of reasons detailed below, it didn't quite get there.

The progression of the narrative was well done – Lavender kept the suspense meter amped up as the book alternated between 1994 and the present. Little by little we learn how Alex proved Richard Aldiss's innocence in 1994, as we simultaneously learn how she uncovers the murderer's identity in the present. This technique hooked me into the dual storylines and kept me turning the pages.

I also liked the way Lavender effectively depicted the competitiveness between the star students in 1994, as this was a crucial aspect of the plot.

The relationship between Alex Shipley, a Harvard professor and former student, and Richard Aldiss, the enigmatic professor whose innocence she proved in 1994, is derivative of that between Hannibal Lecter and Clarice Starling. I liked how Richard Aldiss's character is deliberately ambiguous – did he or didn't he do it? Is he or isn't he evil? However, his explanation of why he kept secret for 12 years a key piece of information which could have proven his innocence is just ridiculous. Being tight-lipped and coy when you're facing life in prison isn't the mark of an enigma, it's unrealistic.

And that's really what my dissatisfaction boils down to - the lack of logic. I expect red herrings in mysteries, but the ones used here did not make sense to me. People talk in riddles, which they don't do in real life.

The entire plot revolves around the literary game called the "Procedure" which sounds as mysterious and inviting as a .... biopsy or anything requiring surgical tools. For me to have bought into the book, I needed to buy into the "Procedure's" dangerous mystique; unfortunately, it just sounded like Dungeons and Dragons for lit majors.

*"We were walking down the street...and someone started saying lines. I recognized the passage--it was from deep inside the novel...I fell into my own role, saying the lines and using the gestures exactly from the text. It has to be exact; the player has to show a mastery of Fallows, down to the very last detail. And that second time I knew from others' faces--I had won.'*

*"And what happens if you win?" Mitchell asked quietly.*

*"Aldiss turned his gaze up. Something had changed in his face, eclipsed the hard-set tension from before. His eyes flashed. 'You are accepted,' he said. 'The Procedure ends and you become one of the elite.'*

*"And if you lose?" asked Alex. 'What then?'*

...

*"Then you are shunned. And as a Fallows scholar, to not be inside, to not be one of them--that is a fate worse than death."*

A character called it "high nerd" and I would have to agree (and this is coming from a pretty nerdy lit major). Nothing in the book indicated to me that the "Procedure" was a life or death game (or even fun) so the above passage made me laugh – sorry, I really didn't mean to. Connected with the "Procedure" are the novels of Paul Fallows, the phantom author who may or may not be invented. Again, upon reading vague descriptions of his books, I didn't see any clues as to why they would inspire a cult following.

Dominance felt schizophrenic – one moment an elaborate literary mystery, the next a potboiler riddled with clichéd phrases. I don't mind reading one or the other, but mashed up together, the result confused and disappointed me.

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### **Alisha Marie says**

You ever read a book where you dislike the character so much you WANT them to get picked off by the serial killer? No...well that was my reaction to the main character in Dominance. This chick was a flaming

idiot (when she wasn't being so annoyingly condescending). I could excuse her behavior when she was in college considering she was young and I can buy her naivete then. However, if 15 years pass and you're still acting like a clueless idiot, then I'm thinking that's more of an "it's always going to be there" thing rather than something that can be beaten out of you with time. Unfortunately, the stupid idiot of the main character wasn't my only problem with Dominance.

Dominance is one of those books that has a kick-ass, wonderfully creepy premise...that doesn't live up to its full potential. For example, the Procedure is supposed to be this creepy life and death game that makes everyone who is so absorbed with it go a teeny bit crazy. Yeah, I didn't buy that considering that the Procedure was barely alluded to and what was alluded wasn't interesting enough to make a normal sane person get so involved in it that they are desperate to WIN it at all cost. And the clues that the Night Class connected to Aldiss and the murders were very...out there. I have a hard time believing that someone as idiotic as Alex can make a connection between clues A and B (when A and B have absolutely NOTHING to do with each other and require tons of leaps in logic) when it takes a genius to make those types of connections (and a genius she is not).

Another thing: I get that the author was trying to have this sort of symbiotic relationship between Alex (the idiot) and Aldiss (the somewhat creepy suspect guy), but I just couldn't get into it. Aldiss has the potential to be truly...off and creepy, but he never comes out that way. I didn't see him having the type of presence that would get students to do his bidding. He just wasn't that much of a developed character. In fact, none of the characters were very well-developed. And that made it hard to care about them and react woefully when they started kicking the bucket.

Why the two stars instead of one? Because Dominance really did have a great premise. I also liked how the narrative shifted from the 1994 Night Class to Alex's current thoughts (that could be because I wouldn't have been able to deal with a book that had Alex's sole narrative throughout it). The 1994 narrative reminded me heavily of those teenage slasher flicks from the '90s (a lot of which I adore), so that was naturally my favorite part of Dominance. The current plot was one that I could take or leave.

So, in the end, I was disappointed with Dominance. I think it had the potential to be a really creepy, well-drawn out, psychological thriller, but it fell short. However, the premise was so unique that it kept me reading (that and the fact that it was a Vine book, of course) even when I was rolling my eyes at the stupidity of the main character regardless of the fact that I'm supposed to buy that she's really smart. Anyway, I think maybe I'll give the author's next book a shot in hopes that it's better than this one.

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### **Julie Smith (Knitting and Sundries) says**

This review first appeared on my blog: <http://www.knittingandsundries.com/20...>

In 1994, nine Honors Literature students were chosen to attend the class "Unraveling a Literary Mystery" at Jasper College. The class was to be distance-taught by Dr. Richard Aldiss from his home at the Rock Mountain Correctional Facility, where he is serving time for the 1982 murders of two female Dumant University graduate students. There was no pre-published syllabus, and no one, outside of Aldiss himself, knows what the class will entail.

Paul Fallows is a reclusive novelist. No one knows his identity, and his books have spawned an intellectual game called "The Procedure", where the players must reenact scenes from Fallows' novels perfectly. The

Procedure can happen anywhere, at any time, without any warning.

The class assignment: Find Fallow's identity to find the REAL killer.

Alex Shipley, a former student in the class, one who was instrumental in freeing Aldiss from prison, is now a well-known Harvard professor, involved in a ho-hum relationship. Another former student, Dr. Michael Tanner, who became the Jasper College resident modernist, is found dead in an apparent copycat of the Dumant murders. Alex is called in by the interim dean at Jasper, Dr. Anthony Rice, who asks her to talk to Aldiss. Is she to talk to him simply to get his take? Or is he the killer? If he IS the killer, was he actually really innocent of the previous murders? Did she help free a killer to kill again?

As the 7 remaining students (another former student apparently killed himself a few years ago - or did he?) gather for Michael's memorial service, Alex finds herself suspicious of all of them. Could one of them be the person who murdered Michael?

Dominance fluctuates between past and present, with many mysterious references to The Procedure long before this reader could figure out what The Procedure actually was - this is not a bad thing, as it was a sort of quest to figure it out. Aldiss - what an interesting character to read - he reads like Hannibal Lector (only without the "ummm ... brain is tasty" part). He is very intelligent, and very creepy. The book itself is rather a puzzle or even a maze - with many doors to open and corners to turn while reading. It will keep you on your toes, and both past and present are equally interesting.

From what I've read, Mr. Lavender calls his novels "puzzle thrillers" - not quite thrillers OR mysteries, but a blend of both. I would say that this description is very appropriate. I was totally drawn in to this story (although frustrated a bit at not knowing for a while what The Procedure was), flipping pages almost as fast as I could read, wanting to know what happened next or who the killer was in each case. Were they the same person? THEN, towards the end, it started reading and feeling almost like Friday the 13th or Scream (the original ones where the tension is so high and you have no idea what's going to happen next, but without the blood and gore) - the bad guy/girl keeps popping up - but is it the same villain or different ones or is more than one working together? - just a nail-biting type of read.

This title was my "Fave of the Week" when I read it. If you like thrillers, mysteries, intellectual mysteries ... if you like a book that makes you feel as though you're solving a puzzle - this is the one for you.

QUOTES (from an ARC; may be different in final copy):

You have to believe that I had nothing to do with what is happening now in that house. And also know this - Alex's eyes ran over the rest of the notes, and when she saw what Aldiss had written next, her breath caught in her throat.

-the Procedure has begun. Everything they say, everything you hear could be part of the game. Trust no one.

Alex opened her mouth, wanted to say something, to tell her mother that this morning she would go off to a place she had never been, would board an airplane for only the third time in her life with someone who was still a stranger to her, and together the two of them would try to solve a twenty-year-old mystery.

"Is there any way Aldiss is innocent of the Dumant murders, Dr. Locke?"

Locke laughed. "Impossible," he said. "That man killed those two girls."

Writing: 5 out of 5 stars

Plot: 5 out of 5 stars

Characters: 4 out of 5 stars

Reading Immersion: 4.75 out 5 stars

BOOK RATING: 4.7 out of 5 stars

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### **Jessica at Book Sake says**

I was unimpressed with Will Lavender's novel, *Dominance*. It had an excellent premise and I really wanted to like it, but the writing was terrible. Granted, I'm very detail-oriented (especially when reading a mystery), but I think most readers would be bothered by Lavender's inconsistencies. Usually the problems were small, such as the driver of a car changing from page to page, but they are constant and extremely annoying. The plot is also entirely unbelievable. The most interesting and intelligent character, Aldiss, had his ticket out of prison the entire time, yet he wanted to play games with his own mortality? I think not.

*Dominance* was disappointing to say the least. Personally, I wish someone would re-write this book because I'd love to read it without the perpetual flaws. For now, it's a waste of a perfectly good plot.

Reviewed by Brittany for Book Sake. <http://booksake.blogspot.com>

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### **Richard Gazala says**

Who is Paul Fallows? He's an American literary giant, the author of a pair of novels scoured in college English departments around the country for deep, eternal truths about the human condition. For decades, brilliant English literature students at elite universities across the nation participate in a twisted game called the Procedure in attempting to discover the recondite Fallow's long-obsured true identity. The object of the game is to win, of course. The best players find winning the game comes not so much from trying to uncover who is Fallows, but why is Fallows? And the cost of victory may well prove fatal.

"Dominance" is Will Lavender's second novel, and it's a good book. It's billed as a thriller, but the majority of it reads more like a cozy literary mystery sporadically spattered with murders of varyingly violent description. The story lurches back and forth in time between events set in the present-day and 1994. Though Lavender handles the flashback aspect of his tale reasonably well, it can still make for a disconcerting read, and adds unnecessary confusion to a fairly straightforward murder mystery. Lavender writes well -- despite the recurrent flashbacks the plot progresses at a decent clip, his dialogue is generally realistic, and he's very good at setting tone, mood and atmosphere.

Readers will note obvious correlations linking "Dominance" to popular works preceding it. The relationship between Lavender's main characters, Harvard professor Alex Shipley and her (unjustly?) imprisoned former professor Richard Aldiss, is heavily influenced by the similar contretemps between Hannibal Lecter and Clarice Starling in Thomas Harris' 1988 novel, "The Silence of the Lambs." Much of the present-day plot happens in a creepy old house on a fictional college campus, where seven of Aldiss' former students gather to mourn the death of a recently murdered classmate only to each find him- or herself as much prey as suspect while freshly killed corpses pile up. It's reminiscent of any number of locked room murder mysteries, and sprinkled too with elements from Shirley Jackson's 1959 horror novel "The Haunting of Hill House," and Stephen King's 2002 television miniseries "Rose Red" (which itself owes homage to Jackson's novel).

It's an intelligent and worthwhile read, but readers with an appetite for an action-packed serial killer thriller won't be sated by "Dominance."

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