

LAURENCE MACKIN

Fatboy and the Dancing Ladies

Michael Holman

Abacus, £7.99

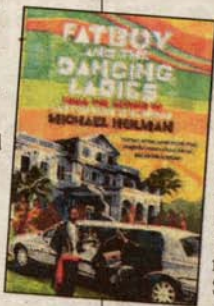
The fatboy of Michael Holman's new book is Ferdinand Mlambo. A senior kitchen *toto* in the presidential residence of the fictional country of Kuwisha, he is stripped of his title and his livelihood and immediately begins plotting his revenge. This, though, feels like the secondary plot to this book, which builds on Holman's earlier novel, *Last Orders at Harrods*.

The heart of the book is life in the shanty town of Kireba, the politics of international aid and the autocratic hierarchy that has often taken hold of fledging states.

Holman puts little distance between himself and the satire: a main character is a journalist for the *Financial News*; Holman was Africa editor of the *Financial Times*.

This is a deft caricature told in sharp, incisive language. An odd note is sounded by the

bloodys, blokes and other Anglicisms of the president of the World Bank (historically an American) and of a Norwegian aid minister. Otherwise, a rattling good read, old boy.



South Africa Lesotho & Swaziland

Rough Guides, £15.99

A tour of a township has become an offbeat tourist trip in many countries; Soweto, in South Africa, is probably the

most popular. This is just one of a number of excursions featured in this guide to the country at the geographical tip and metaphorical heart of Africa.

Whale-watching, where to stay to experience rural life, and exploring the

Drakensberg mountain range are also part of this excellent guide. A clear, considerate section on wildlife also provides an introduction to what to spot on safari.

