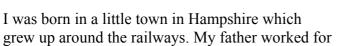
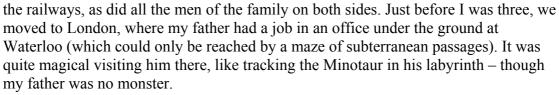
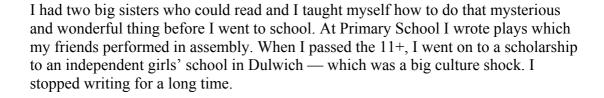
MARY HOFFMAN

Oxford and Italy – two words that have magical associations and not just for me. I wanted to go to university in the first but it was Cambridge that offered me a place. My first trip to Italy was as a 14-year-old.

Now I live less than twenty miles from the city of Oxford and my daughter, who *did* go to university there and never came back, lives half an hour away. As for Italy, I go there at least once a year and sometimes as often as four times. I speak Italian and go to a class (in Oxford) once a week in Italian literature.







After I did my degree (in English Literature) at Cambridge, I took a diploma in linguistics at University College London. In 1970 I started writing my first book, which was published in 1975 as White Magic. Since then, I have written over ninety books for children and teenagers, including the picture book Amazing Grace, the *Stravaganza* series of fantasy novels and historical novels, like The Falconer's Knot and Troubadour.

My husband is Stephen Barber, who is half-Indian, and we have three daughters. The eldest one, Rhiannon Lassiter, is a published writer of Science Fiction/Fantasy. The second is a theatre producer (Rebecca) and the third (Jessica) is an architect.

We moved from London to a big old converted barn in West Oxfordshire in early 2001 and lots of full-length novels have been written in my lovely new study there, which its green and white, with French windows opening on to the garden. I can



watch the birds on the bird table and rescue them if they are attacked by any of our three Burmese cats.