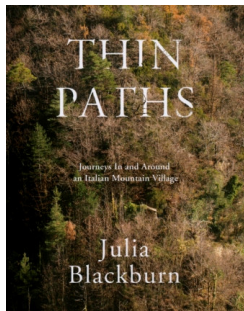


SHORTLIST FOR THE 2011 COSTA BIOGRAPHY AWARD

Judges

Sue Baker
Peter Donaldson
Flora Fraser

Reviewer (The Bookseller/lovereading.co.uk)
Owner, Red Lion Bookshop, Colchester
Writer/Historical Biographer



Thin Paths: Journeys In and Around an Italian Mountain Village by Julia Blackburn (*Jonathan Cape*)

Julia Blackburn and her husband moved to a house in the mountains of northern Italy in 1999. A series of events brought her close to the old people of the village who began to tell her stories that made the landscape come alive. Until recently

most of them had been *mezzadri*, half-people who were trapped in an archaic feudal system and owned by a local *padrone* who demanded his share of all they had – even a pretty wife or daughter. They were eager to talk about the old way of life and how everything changed with the eruption of the Second World War. ‘Write it down for us,’ they said, ‘because otherwise it will all be lost.’

Julia Blackburn has written five books of non-fiction, a family memoir and two novels, *The Book of Colour* and *The Leper’s Companions*, both of which were shortlisted for the Orange Prize. She is the author of seventeen short stories specially commissioned by BBC Radio, and four radio plays.

Judges: “A beautiful and unusual exploration of a strange landscape and forgotten lives in a remote Italian region that captivated us all.”



Henry’s Demons: Living with Schizophrenia - A Father and Son’s Story by Patrick and Henry Cockburn (*Simon and Schuster*)

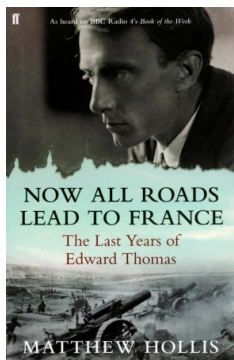
On a cold February day two months after his 20th birthday, Henry Cockburn waded into the freezing water of Newhaven estuary outside Brighton and tried to swim across,

almost drowning in the process. Voices, he said, had told him to do it. Nearly halfway around the world in Afghanistan, journalist Patrick Cockburn learned that his son had been admitted to a hospital mental ward. Ten days later, Henry was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia. Thus begins Patrick and Henry's extraordinary account of Henry's rapid descent into mental illness and of Patrick's journey towards understanding the changes in his son.

Patrick Cockburn is Iraq correspondent for the *Independent* who has won several prizes including the Martha Gellhorn prize for war reporting and the Orwell prize in 2009. His book *The Occupation: War and Resistance in Iraq* was short-listed for the National Book Critics Circle Award in 2007 and he is the author of *Muqtada al-Sadr and the Fall of Iraq*.

Henry Cockburn was born in 1982 and went to King's School Canterbury, Wimbledon Art College and Brighton University. He was diagnosed with schizophrenia in 2002 and has spent the following years in mental hospitals. He currently lives in a half-way house in Lewisham.

Judges: "A powerfully direct and honest account of the impact of mental illness on a young man and his family."



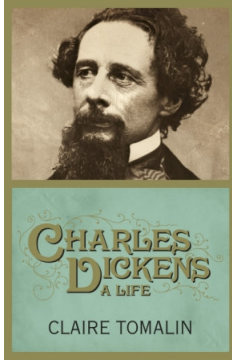
Now All Roads Lead to France: The Last Years of Edward Thomas by **Matthew Hollis** (*Faber and Faber*)

Now All Roads Lead to France is an account of the final five years of Edward Thomas's life, centred on his extraordinary friendship with Robert Frost and Thomas's fatal decision to fight in the First World War. The book also evokes an astonishingly creative moment

in English literature: characters such as W. B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, Robert Frost and Rupert Brooke surround a central figure, tormented by his work and his marriage. As his friendship with Frost blossomed, Thomas wrote poem after poem, and his emotional affliction began to lift. In 1914, the two friends formed the ideas that would produce some of the most remarkable verse of the twentieth century. But the War put an ocean between them: Frost returned to the safety of New England while Thomas stayed to fight, culminating in his tragic death on Easter Monday 1917.

Matthew Hollis is the author of *Ground Water*, shortlisted for the Whitbread Prize for Poetry, the Guardian First Book Award and the Forward Prize for Best First Collection. *Now All Roads Lead to France* is his first prose book. Originally from Norwich, he now lives in London.

Judges: "We all loved the lyrical prose of this debut biography written by one poet looking across the years at another. It opens a new window on the generation of writers that fought and died in the First World War."



Charles Dickens: A Life by Claire Tomalin (*Viking*)

Even to his contemporaries, Charles Dickens was a phenomenon. A political radical, a demonically hardworking journalist, the father of ten children, an actor and playwright, a newspaper editor, a supporter of liberal social causes, but above all else a peerless novelist

and the creator of immortal characters. Yet the brilliance concealed a self-destructive character and a man often at war with himself. This literary trailblazer, and frequent contender for the title of the greatest Briton of all time, went from pawning his own books aged 12 to pay his father's debts to having 100,000 readers a week at the height of his fame.

Claire Tomalin was Literary Editor of the *New Statesman* then the *Sunday Times* before leaving to become a full-time writer. Her first book, *The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft*, won the Whitbread First Book Award, and she has since written a number of highly-acclaimed and bestselling biographies including *Samuel Pepys: The Unequalled Self* which was named 2002 Whitbread Book of the Year. Claire Tomalin is married to the writer Michael Frayn.

Judges: "Deftly handled biography of Britain's greatest storyteller. We were enthralled by Tomalin's account of Dickens' packed life."