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The “Nonino” to Pierre Michon’s tiny universal destinies

The jury presided by V. S. Naipaul has awarded also the agronomist Isabella Dalla Ragione, the historian Cyprian Broodbank and the philosopher John Gray.

by **MARISA FUMAGALLI**

Any time the jury of the Nonino Prize announces the names of the prizewinners the surprise effect is certain. On the other hand, it is an acknowledgement that for its intrinsic nature sets itself out of the schemes of the competitive-cultural survey. In short, they range and fly high searching for the most meaningful personalities to insert in the four sections of the Prize, created by an intelligent family of Friulian distillers. The premises (which smell of wonderful grappa) are in Percoto, few kilometers from Udine. So, the number one of the forty-second edition have been selected by a quality jury, presided by V.S. Naipaul, Nobel Laureate in Literature 2001. The only Italian and the only woman among the four winners is the agronomist Isabella Dalla Ragione, Tuscan, resident in Perugia. She is the winner of the «Nonino Risit d’Aur (Gold vine shoot) 2017». She likes to call herself an «arboreal archeologist », she moves among archives, chronicles and traditions aiming to the knowledge bound to the territory. In perfect tune with the Nonino that dedicates the greatest attention to the rural civilization and its knowledge. «Coming into action with plantings and grafts – it is written in the motivation - with devotion she preserves ancient colors, fragrances and tastes, saving them from their oblivion».

We move to France to meet the «adventurous» writer who has won the Nonino International Prize 2017. Pierre Michon, an original gentleman who traveled a lot when he was young, as he had joined a small theatre company. The Jury says about him: «Considered a cult author ... in *Small lives* (Adelphi) the tales turn into frescoes where apparently tiny existences become extraordinary, paradigms of our being, ties to an ancestral world which is the deep soul of our culture».

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Cent'anni della Famiglia Nonino

In the group, here is a British archeologist and academic, Cyprian Broodbank, selected for the Nonino Prize 2017. One of his books, *Mediterraneo* (Einaudi) awarded the Wolfson History Prize, has the following motivation: «Broodbank's work, now considered "a masterpiece of the archeological, historical and geographic research of the Mediterranean", with a winning writing proposes in more than six-hundred pages the prehistory and evolution of the Middle Sea, from the birth of agriculture to the development of navigation and metallurgy, from the rising of archaic myths to the deep suggestions of art and thought». Finally, an English political philosopher for the Nonino Prize Master of our Time 2017. John Gray. «He has held prestigious posts at the Oxford University and at the London School of Economics. However, in the latest decade he has become also one of the outstanding voices of contemporary thought — it is highlighted — Gray has contested consolidated assumptions in the social thought and in political history. He has predicted events such as the 2007 economic crisis and the rise of populist governments». The awarding ceremony will take place on January 28th (at 11:00) at the Nonino Distilleries in Ronchi di Percoto.