

Maori writers will be read internationally

And speaking of Maori International, one particularly international Maori this year is Rowley Habib, who has been awarded the Katherine Mansfield Memorial Fellowship. This most prestigious of New Zealand's literary awards offers the winner the opportunity to live and write in the South of France — staying in the house at Menton on the Mediterranean coast where Katherine Mansfield herself once lived.

Of the distinguished writers to have won the Fellowship — they include Maurice Shadbolt, Janet Frame and Michael King — Rowley is the first Maori to be going to France. (Though in 1959, when the competition was organised along different lines, Arapera Blank was a winner.) Best known in recent years for his television plays, Rowley has been writing poetry and short stories for over two decades. In his acceptance speech at the award function, held in Wellington last November, he paid tribute to *Te Ao Hou* and its first editor, Eric Schwimmer, for the encouragement he received in those early days.

Meanwhile further overseas opportunities await another Maori writer. The Mobil Oil company has focused its attention this year on New Zealand, and on Maoridom in particular, for its annual Pegasus Prize for Literature.

The intention of the prize is to introduce American readers to the literature of other countries and other cultures — works which might otherwise never reach such a wide readership. The *Los Angeles Times* captured the essence of the prize when it named one prize-winner as one of the best books of the year and commented: "One must wonder what other great works of contemporary literature we are missing".

Why New Zealand, and why Maori writers? Mobil has already demonstrated an interest in the cultural achievement of the Maori with its sponsorship of *Te Maori* — the exhibition travelling to the United States later this year.

As one of Mobil's directors, Rex Willoughby, said when launching the Pegasus Prize at a hui at Hoani Waititi Marae in Auckland, "As the spotlight falls on *Te Maori* and the unique and highly advanced culture of the Maori people, so it will illuminate the achievement of Maori writers. In New Zealand we are experiencing a cultural resurgence, some say renaissance, which this prize will do much to advance. It will not only give recognition to Maori writers overseas but, perhaps more im-

portantly, the recognition and support they deserve right here in Aotearoa."

A good point. When Rowley Habib acknowledged his Katherine Mansfield Fellowship at the award function in Wellington last November, he could not resist a dig at the massive lack of interest New Zealand book publishers had shown Maori writers. It's difficult to disagree with him; browsing through the average bookshop it would be easy to support that there are no Maori writers at all. Browsing through a better shop you'll come across the works of Witi Ihimaera, Patricia Grace, perhaps Hone Tuwhare and Heretaunga Pat Baker. Apirana Taylor and Haere Williams have also had poetry published, but at considerable personal effort and certainly without the resources of the New Zealand book publishers at their disposal. The Pegasus Prize could give Maori writing the legitimacy in both literary and publishing circles (by no means the same thing) it has previously been denied. Let's hope that our own publishers will show more willingness to support new faces — and Maori ones at that. The work of our authors and poets need not be buried in small magazines and anthologies, or aired at readings to friends and the already converted.

Two criteria for the prize are that submissions 1. should be representative of their culture and 2. should serve a cross-cultural purpose.

This is probably why Professor Sidney Moko Mead, chairman of the judges' panel, has selected his judging colleagues from outside the mainstream of the literary establishment. They are: Dr Peter Sharples (Ngati Kahungunu), Maori Affairs, Auckland; Dr Ann Salmond, Anthropology Department, Auckland University, author *Hui, Amiria* and *Eruera*; Dr Terry Sturm (Ngati Kahungunu and Ngai Tai), Professor of English, Auckland University; Mrs Elizabeth Murchie (Ngai Tahu), Waiariki Community College and a past President of the MWWL; and Wiremu Parker (Ngati Porou), amongst many other things amorangi of the Maori Studies Department at Victoria University.

It's a formidable and thoughtfully selected team.

They can only choose one winner — for whom the prizes are considerable, including \$4000 in cash, a gold medal, guaranteed publication in the United States by the Louisiana State University Press and an all-expenses-paid promotional tour of the United States.

But in another way we're all winners. The Pegasus Prize will introduce to an already Maori-conscious American public the newer arts of the Maori people. As a complement to *Te Maori* exhibition, our thoughts, feelings, aspirations and lifestyle will also become better known through the medium not of wood or bone but of the printed word. And we can only hope that the splash created in America will set up ripples which will reach Auckland's North Shore, where most of our own publishers have their offices.

Ko te Pegasus Prize he koha naa te Kaporeihana o Mobil i tuku-a-tau mai i te tau 1977, hei whakamatatau i ngaa iwi o Aamerika ki ngaa tuhituhinga koorero kahore anoo kia taiaawhio i te ao oona rongo. Kua whakatuuria he komiti, kei a ia toona ake mana, hei tiroiro i ngaa tino tuhituhinga koorero paarekareka — i ngaa mea kua taaia me ngaa mea kaahore anoo kia taaia — eengari naa te Maaori i tuhihi i roto i te tekau tau mai i te tahi o Mei, 1974, ki te tahi o Mei, 1984, i roto i te reo Ingarihi, i te reo Maaori raanei. Ko ngaa tuhituhinga ka whakamaatauria ko ngaa rerenga koorero puurakau roa, ko ngaa huinga koorero paki, koorero poto, me ngaa rerenga koorero a te kai-tuhi moona ake anno. Ko te mea nui kia whiwhi maaramatanga teetahi iwi ki ngaa aahuatanga huhua o teetahi atu iwi. Araa, kia moohiotia ki waenga i ngaa iwi o te ao ngaa tuhituhinga kua hira i roto o Niu Tireni — maa te Perehi o te Whare Waananga o Louisiana e taa. Ko te koha moni maa te kai-tuhi e whakaingoaia e \$4,000, aapiti atu ki te hei rino, me te utu o te haere ki Aamerika whakaari ai i tana pukapuka. Maa te Koha Pegasus moo ngaa tuhituhinga e taapiri te whakakitekenga o ngaa Taonga Maaori ki New York, timata i te tekau o Hepetema, 1984.