**Katherine Mansfield Sculpture – 200 words**

It’s my great pleasure to say a few words on behalf of the Katherine Mansfield Society. Dr Gerri Kimber, the UK- based Chair of the KMS, sends her apologies.

There was an intense friendship and rivalry between Virginia Woolf and Katherine Mansfield, and some of that spirit of rivalry has informed this project, because the idea arose when delegates at the 2008 KM conference in London learnt that a bust of VW had recently been installed in Tavistock Square, Bloomsbury. It struck the newly-formed KM Society that there ought to be a sculpture of Mansfield in her home town of Wellington. So the Secretary cheekily emailed the then Mayor of Wellington, Kerry Prendergast, who immediately replied “yes”, convened a meeting in her office with Professor Vincent O’Sulllivan and me from the KMS, and Jon Craig and Neil Plimmer from the WST – and the rest, after a lot of hard work, is history.

Mansfield matters profoundly in world literature because her writing altered the conventions of narrative, which in turn altered how we read fiction. But she also counts as a great New Zealander, a woman whose life and work has inspired generations of women in NZ and around the world.

Virginia’s sculpture captures aspects of Mansfield’s writing and personality - the illumination from within, and the sense that the figure is striding out or “shaking free” - the expression Mansfield used to describe how she was trying to escape the strictures of in her day, both in terms of how she wrote, and how she lived.

The setting for the sculpture is apt. Mansfield’s stories often feature an observer character, sitting in a park or a café, studying people and making fiction projections about their lives. Virginia’s sculpture, set on one of Wellington’s busiest streets (one that Mansfield walked often) is in a park, outside cafés – a theatre for watching people.

So on behalf of the Katherine Mansfield Society, I’d like to express a debt of gratitude to the former mayor Kerry Prendergast, mayor Celia Wade Brown, the Wellington City Council, the Wellington Sculpture Trust, the committee who worked on this project and all those who donated, for creating this tribute to New Zealand’s greatest writer, and for ensuring that there is now permanently recognition that Wellington was home to this towering figure in world literature, Katherine Mansfield.