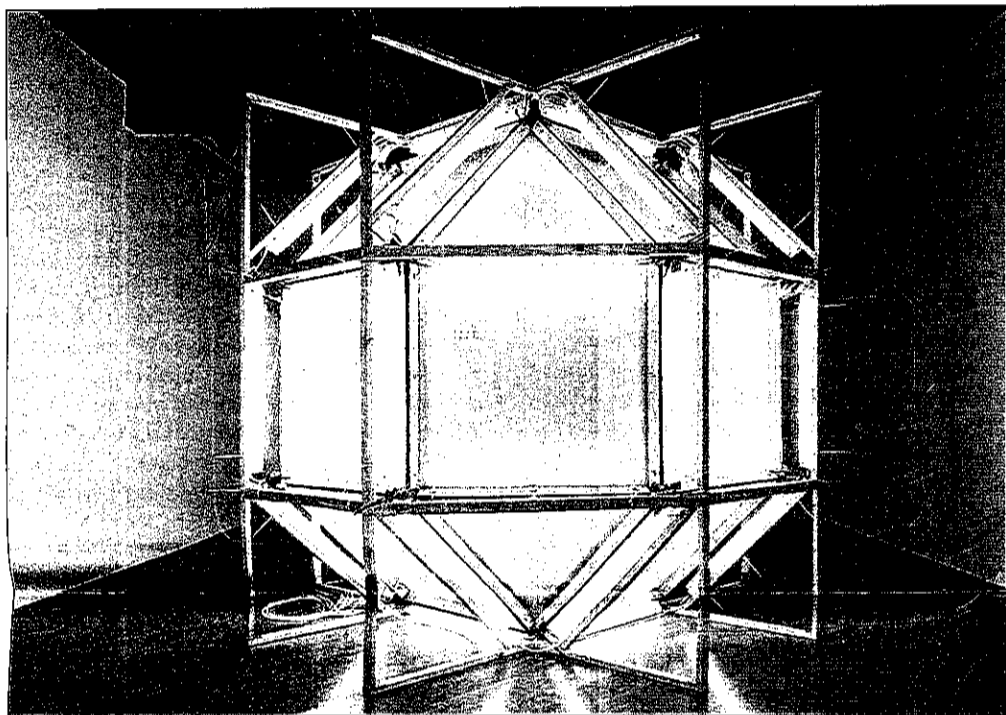


JAMES JOYCE BROADSHEET

POLYHEDRA AND JOYCE: A ROOM FOR THOUGHT

by Christa-Maria Lerm Hayes

DAVIDE CASCIO'S *Polyhedra: A Room in Which to Read Joyce's 'Ulysses'* is a complex work, even without its title. The work, first produced in 2004, recently figured in an exhibition entitled *Convergence: Literary Art Exhibitions* in Belfast and Limerick in 2011. It was placed in a room that also included work by Cerith Wyn Evans, Kenneth Goldsmith, Pavel Büchler and Simon Morris. In the following, I sketch a number of the art-historical references that present themselves in Cascio's work, before embarking on a Joycean reading.



Polyhedra, despite the complexity just claimed, is formally simple, clearly geometric. In terms of its art-historical referents, elements of it sit perfectly well with a Constructivist use of scaffolding (Vladimir Tatlin) and with Minimalist art's obsession with geometry (Sol LeWitt, Tony Smith, *et al.*). Dan Flavin's use of neon lights is echoed, as well as the customized space of Kurt Schwitters' *Merzbau*, including the legacy of such Modernist work in more recent installations by Bruce Nauman, Dan Graham and even Liam Gillick, whose interest is in creating spaces for dialogue.

The poster publication that accompanies Cascio's work points to the Renaissance and includes a perspective on Classical Antiquity. Leonardo's *Vitruvian Man* is a particularly apt reference point, as human anatomy lends Cascio's work its scale, if not more. The poster presents a LeCorbusier-like drawing of a man with outstretched arm measuring the space inside. In Renaissance geometrical studies of intricate polyhedra, space appears to recede and protrude in suggestively Modernist, indeterminate ways, revealing a Medieval uncertainty which such studies had set out to eradicate. Alchemy comes to mind as much as the 'sculptural' output of chémiistry's neatly-constructed atom structures. Similarities between micro- and macrocosm are invoked when the viewer is led to consider *Polyhedra* as just one atom in an indefinite series, where the 'scaffolding' can easily provide support to the adjacent polyhedron on any side. We may find our thoughts travelling to the universe's black holes or to Mandelbrodt functions, where inside and outside become confused. As in a Gothic cathedral, we see the light shining inwards and outwards, where the internal space itself is characterized by clarity in form and concept, while supports in the form of buttresses are used outside.

Flowers mark the summit of the vaults in

Cascio's construction, the artist reflecting on floral motifs in Arabic design where, again, an infinite series of the individual elements can be found. The cubic clarity of the Kaaba at Mecca gives a meaningful counterpoint to what was long considered purely formal play with geometry in Minimalist art, that is, until Georges Didi-Huberman unearthed other aspects of the Minimalist cubes of artists like Tony Smith, including the deepest meaning about life or, more precisely, about death, in the inextricable associations of his work with coffins. Didi-Huberman retained the formal(ist) gaze as valid and, in his *Was wir sehen blickt uns an* (1999), linked that connection of previously incompatible opposites with none other than James Joyce.

Joycean Geometry

JOYCE was no stranger to geometry. The first page of 'The Sisters' contains the word 'gnomon', an image of cosmic meanings (the sundial) and of the space between the micro- and macro-cosmos. *Finnegans Wake* is also a geometric 'machine': one intended to square the circle, since the square book contains the 'round', re-cycling text. In Joyce and Cascio external and internal views also play their roles. The 'night-book' may be seen to be set inside either a body or a 'museum' space that contains all of history and is not particularly solid.

Cascio's wide-ranging references are suggestively Joycean even without taking account of the book that Cascio specifically cites: *Ulysses*. If Joyce repeatedly links the minutest everyday detail of Dublin 1904 to cosmic events and antique mythology, Cascio's proliferation of allusions does so too. The artist has literally taken up Pound's claim that Joyce used the *Odyssey* as 'scaffolding' for *Ulysses*. This may reveal a Joycean

allegiance with the Constructivist tendencies of the time in that phrase, even if it is one which seems almost uncharacteristically bereft of the multiplicities of meaning that other metaphors Joyce used about his writing can display. To call his practice not trivial but 'quadrivial', or to employ the squaring of the circle image may, at first, appear more replete with meaning and thus closer to the work. However, through Cascio, we may read 'Joyce's scaffolding' in more complex ways, including consideration of the writer's possible reflection on Renaissance geometry, the framing of Leonardo's *Vitruvian Man* and possibly other reference points since.

The jury of the Vordemberge-Gildewart-prize, which Cascio received in 2005, reflected on *Polyhedra* as a 'thought form'. Joyce was a contemporary of Annie Besant and Charles Leadbeater, who drew energy forms and colours at the beginning of the Twentieth Century. Joyce may have been skeptical about such esoteric games as teirs, but thoughts do indeed find regular, geometric forms in Joyce's and Cascio's universes. They gain experiential space.

Inside *Polyhedra* is a room where some might see thoughts bouncing off all sides and going in more directions than is usually the case. In the first instance, however, *Polyhedra's* room is a concentrated space. It could be thought of as a continuation of a line of reading rooms from the British Library's dome to the ellipse of that of the Warburg Institute in Hamburg. It might be that, as Warburg's contemporary, Joyce would be at home in an elliptical, 'non-binary' room rather than in one with just one centre. Cascio provides the necessary expansion in the space's multi-directedness, as well as in the continuation into different plateaus and rhizomes that the scaffolding allows.

Reading Rooms

AS A READING ROOM, *Polyhedra* functions as a time capsule, bridging the hundred years between the 'Bloomsday' of *Ulysses* and its creation with ease. Neon, as the quintessential advertising light, refers to Leopold Bloom, who sells ads, while his name and the mention of the language of flowers explains Cascio's use of flowers in his work. The use of neon may or may not constitute a reference to the fact that Dan Flavin also referred in his work to Joyce (see Govan and Bell, *Dan Flavin: A Retrospective*, Yale, 2005).

Polyhedra is capsular in the sense that reading isolates. It takes the reader out of this world and lets him or her develop their own internal pictorial one. Reading *Ulysses* stretches anyone's powers of imagination. Joyce worked with several versions of certain events, leaving it up to the reader to assemble the world and make sense of it. Cascio does not address this Joyce-experienced reader by presenting an interior cinema illustrating such events. Instead, he encourages the greatest possible variety of interpretations through the simplicity of his work and by offering it as an experiential space.

In its way, Cascio's *Polyhedra* has some similarity with Tania Mourand's *Initiation Room No 4, 1969/89*, a high but narrow space for viewers, illuminated from above. There, neither the multifaceted geometry nor a reference to a literary world was given. Cascio, however, seems to agree with many of Joyce's readers that reading *Ulysses* represents an occasion for a modern-day rite of passage. He is unlikely to let any of us leave his *Polyhedra* unchanged in our ideas about the phe-

nomenological and conceptual ambitions for sculpture, architecture or the scope of current art practice.

Cable-ties and cardboard may be relatively familiar sights in an exhibition of recent art, but the latter was already the medium with which Constantin Brancusi chose to create his *Portrait of James Joyce* in 1928. The copper spiral that Brancusi's relief features alongside the cardboard disc may be echoed by the electric cables, also containing copper, that connect the neon lights in Cascio's sculpture and which have clear references to the use of the everyday in *Ulysses*. The oscillation of which Didi-Huberman wrote connects to the abstraction and figuration used by artists on all sides and observed by critics in Joyce's work (Lerm Hayes, *Joyce in Art*, 2004). By merging East and West, 'high' and 'low', alchemy and chemistry, history and the present, Joyce provides the possibility for creators to combine theoretical rigour and historical interest to create an all-inclusive universe.

Puzzlement may remain that a structure as simple and geometrically reduced as Cascio's might refer to James Joyce, rather than, say, to Samuel Beckett. Joyce, there is no doubt, was an encyclopedically-inclined writer, but he used the great variety of detail that he accommodated in his (later) works in a conceptual way. The 'scaffolding' metaphor is an expression of this fact. Cascio's *Polyhedra*, showing what is usually hidden and thus foregrounding how something is made, has to be understood in such correspondence with Joyce. The variety of possible interpretations and the activation of viewers' interests results from the simplicity of the geometric shape and from the media chosen. If the polyhedron had a more complicated shape, the effect may have been to narrow down meaning, not to enhance it.

Cascio, like many an artist since the 1960s, follows Joyce's ways of thinking. He draws on the freedom that a change in the artform can provide when commenting on cultural traditions. Nicolas Bourriaud's category of 'Postproduction' (2002) can both be applied and stretched here. Cascio uses Joyce freely, commenting and extending more than illustrating or idolizing him, using him 'to probe the contemporary world' and more. Being deeply knowledgeable, he can take a position that is entirely of the minute and at the same time Modernist, that of a Renaissance artist and a time-capsule architect.

One can also think of the space as one that enables such 'relational' activities as *Ulysses* reading groups. Cascio confidently owns the writer, whilst also showing that Joyce's work 'takes on a script-like value', enabling ever-new thought forms. With *Polyhedra*, he squares the circle.

This essay is an adaptation in English of my essay, '*Polyhedra e Joyce: Una stanza per pensare*' – Davide Cascio, Museo Cantonale d'Arte Lugano, Lugano, 2007, pp. 56-70.

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DUBLIN NEWS

THE 'MINCE-PIE' LECTURE at the James Joyce Cultural Centre in December came by its research scholar, Terence Killeen, speaking on Joyce and Beckett as letter writers and comparing the style and information in the published collections of their letters. A couple of months later the 'birthday cake' lecture was given on 2 February by Andrew Gibson, who linked *Exiles* to the events of 1912 and the suffragist movement. In December the Centre was sorry to lose one of its founding members, Patricia McHugh, who had been involved with the Centre from its outset. Patricia was the widow of the early and eminent Irish Joyce scholar Roger McHugh of UCD.

The new-found freedom arising from the expiry of copyright in Joyce's works has already been widely celebrated. One of the first events in Dublin was a reading of 'Telemachus' at the Joyce Tower by Paul O'Hanrahan on a windy New Year's Day. The feast of Epiphany saw further readings at a well-attended 'Dead' dinner at the Gresham Hotel held to raise funds for Sweny's chemist shop. Sweny's is now well established with its regular reading sessions and activities, but continues to rely very much on the support of volunteers and the general public. In April, *Dubliners* has been selected by Dublin City Libraries for its 'One City, One Book' festival which will feature readings, performances, lectures, exhibitions and related events at venues all around the city. This marks some advance from the situation a hundred years ago when Mansel's were so reluctant to visit the book on the good readers of Joyce's city.

Contributors in the world of Dublin's publishers. The little-known Ithys press, whose sole previous publication was *Love and Curiosity-The Cosmos* by the Joycean authors Danis Rose and John O'Hanlon, has just published 'The Cats of Copenhagen', a (very) short children's story written in a letter from James Joyce to his grandson in 1936, in a limited edition of 200 at prices ranging from 300 to 1200 (for rich children). The letter is in the possession of the Zürich James Joyce Foundation. It was copied and published without their knowledge or permission (which the publishers claim was neither necessary nor desirable). Needless to say, the controversy has attracted more attention than the text itself.

The James Joyce Institute of Ireland, having reached the final pages of *Occasional Critical and Political Writings*, has announced its intention to launch once again into *Finnegans Wake* after the Feast of the Resurrection. This will be the Institute's third formal end-to-end reading of the *Wake*, and like its predecessors is expected to take six or seven years. The *Wake* is very much the book *du jour* in Dublin at present, with another group in the Centre already halfway through and lively weekly sessions in Sweny's for the less initiated. Visitors for the Symposium in June will find Dubliners well-exposed to the Joycean looking-glass.

The National Library has plans to establish a special home for their considerable holdings of Joycean material at the Aula Maxima adjoining Newman House, with an emphasis on making them more accessible to researchers and the public through displays, exhibitions and digital technology. Some designation other than 'museum' or 'centre' will have to be found to avoid confusion with existing Joyce institutions.

James Joyce's guitar, from the photograph by Ottocaro Weiss, was presented to the James Joyce Museum at Sandycove by Paul Ruggiero in 1966. In March this year the instrument was repaired and restored by Gary Southwell, using the facilities of the National Museum of Ireland. Some of the minor surface damage incurred during its years in Zürich was repaired and the guitar is now as it was when Joyce played it nearly a century ago. The instrument itself appears to date from about 1830. The restoration was sponsored and arranged by Professor Fran O'Rourke of UCD, who has organised a series of recitals with the guitar to be held in Newman House during the week of the Symposium.

The continuing process of shrinkage in public space stilling has had its impact on the museum, currently run by Fáilte Ireland, the national tourism authority, with whom Dublin Tourism was integrated earlier this year. At present the Tower is only open by appointment, and, by the time the museum celebrates its fiftieth anniversary in June, it may have been transferred to other hands. To the regret of the undersigned, the present curator, who has been here since 1978, is unlikely to be included in the transfer as he is needed to make up staff numbers at the Dublin Writers Museum. Watch this space.

Robert Nicholson

THE CATS AMONG THE PIGEONS

IN THIS ISSUE Robert Nicholson gives us the gist of the controversy surrounding the publication by the Ithys Press of *The Cats of Copenhagen* in his *Dublin News*. So far we have found further extensive reports and comments on this in many reputable publications (*BBC News*, *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, the *TLS* and *The Irish Times*). Contributors to the exposition of the case: Fritz Senn, writing for the Zürich James Joyce Foundation, owners of the 1936 letter from James Joyce to Stephen Joyce (by virtue of the Hans E. Jahnke bequest) from which the 242-word text of the book has been copied; Anastasia Herbert, publisher of the book and as Stacey Herbert a well-known Joyce specialist; J. C., the author of the *N.B.* feature in the *TLS*, which strikingly challenged the description of *The Cats* as a story at all, 'rather a charming scribble to a little boy, the likes of which many grandfathers have written'; Hans Walter Gabler, the eminent editor of Joyce texts, supplemented J. C.'s commentary with Joyce in the *TLS* exposing the legal indeterminacy of the respective rights of document owners and copyright owners; and the Italian James Joyce Foundation. Senn has responded indignantly to what he sees as the failure of common courtesy and breach of trust involved in this copying for publication about which the Zürich Foundation had not been informed and for which it had not given permission. J. C., Gabler and the Italian Foundation have supported Senn's position, with Gabler and the Italians forthrightly calling the publication 'piracy'. Ms. Herbert has defended the action of the Ithys press in this piece of book-making art – this little children's story as 'a carefully crafted tribute to a rather different Joyce, the family man and grandfather who was a fine storyteller, much like his own father John Stanislaus Joyce'. Ms. Herbert's claims that such material unpublished in Joyce's lifetime is now (since 1 January 2012) in the public domain and that even if permission to publish had been needed a request for permission would have proved fruitless in the light of the close association of the Zürich Foundation with the James Joyce Estate which had a record of frustrating publications. So far the only other title published by the Ithys Press has been *Love & Curiosity-The Cosmos* by Danis Rose and John O'Hanlon. Ms. Herbert's contested defence in the case of *The Cats* may have wider implications. It has been suggested that other hitherto unpublished Joycean material in the possession of the National Library of Ireland may be published by the Press. It has been claimed that the Irish Government and the National Library of Ireland may have been procrastinating about asserting the ownership of the copyright.

A.S.

CONTRIBUTORS

Rebekah Frumkin, from Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota, was a first-time attendee at the 2011 Zürich conference and recipient of Carleton's Samuel Strauss Prize for Humorous Writing (2009).

Madeleine Geddes-Barton graduates with an M.A. from the School of English at the University of Leeds and begins a Ph.D. on Joyce at King's College Cambridge in 2012.

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Angus McFadzean completed a Ph.D. on 'Epiphany and Transgression: from Aesthetics to Narrative in the Novels of James Joyce' at Wadham College, Oxford.

David Pierce's memoir *The Long Apprenticeship*, is published by Macadoran 2012.

Emanuela Zizotti teaches at the University of Rome 'La Sapienza' and is working on a book on Seamus Heaney.

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MASTERCLASS JOYCE

IN ADVANCE of a series of masterclasses in the writing of fiction, running from October 2011 to January 2012, *The Guardian* published a 40 page supplement on 'How to Write Fiction' (14 October 2011). Pertinent topics such as 'Point of View' and 'Plot' were introduced by leading contemporary writers. 'Description' was eloquently expounded by the award-winning young English poet and novelist Andrew Foulds, author of the book-length narrative poem *The Broken Word* and the superb novel about John Clare, *The Quickening Maze*, which was short-listed for the Man Booker Prize in 2009. Foulds's article, 'By strength or submission', uses a range of outstanding examples of descriptive writing (Flaubert, James, Hemingway) but begins with rhapsodic close readings of two short instances from *Ulysses*, featuring the 'sluggish cream' in Molly's tea and the 'smoking pith' of Mulligan's scone, which exemplify Foulds's contention that 'description in fiction should always be at least as vivid as lived experience, generally more so'. He goes on to say, following the quotation from T. S. Eliot in his title, that 'description masters reality, but it can only come after submission to experience.' Thus lover-like Joyce 'owns the wealth of experience – that slow spiral of cream, the smoking scone – through his submission to it, his open, rapt absorption'. Foulds gave his *Guardian Masterclass* on Fiction alongside Sarah Hall in London on 28-29 January this year (2012).

THE MOST DIFFICULT?

IN 2009 *THE MILLIONS*, an on-line literary magazine created by C. Max Magee in 2003, started a 'Difficult Books' series. Now its curator, Emily Collette Wilkinson and Ruth Risk Hallber, have published its list of 'The Top Ten Most Difficult Books'. 'Most Difficult' is defined as 'hardest and most frustrating', but the list is no philistine grouse. Emily's chosen five – *Nightwood*, *A Tale of the Tub*, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, *To the Lighthouse* and *Clarissa* – are all challenging texts commented on with respect. Garth's choice is similarly eclectic and distinctly admiring: *Finnegans Wake*, *Being and Time*, *The Faerie Queene*, *The Making of Americans* and *Women and Men*. This last-named item, Joseph McElroy's 1987 'post-

modern meganovel' (1191 pages) is the least well-known, but it is a reading of the *Wake* which is probably most warmly and distinctively recommended: 'You'll be maddened, you'll be moved, and you'll be done in four weeks'. Less sympathetic critics might have written 'done in' in four weeks!

A.S.

LETTERS

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

The Irish Census records for 1901 and 1911 are now available on-line and are a useful resource for identifying transitory characters in *Ulysses*. The 1901 set in particular is interesting. For instance, Gifford (p.273) was unable to identify John Mulligan, 'the manager of the Hibernian Bank', in the 'Wandering Rocks' episode (10.746). The 1901 Census, however, records John Mulligan as a Bank Director aged 63, single, and residing in 12 Silchester Road, Glashtule, with his 65-year-old sister, Jane, also unmarried, together with one servant. The Mulligans were both born in Dublin and all three residents were Roman Catholic. It is very gratifying to be able to see his firm signature where he completed the form as 'head of the household'. It is also of interest that he was still living there at the time of the 1911 Census. Although Silchester Road was in the registration district of Glashtule it would properly be described as being in Glenageary and is a road of large, mainly detached houses. We can now be confident that he was a real person and was either sufficiently eminent for Joyce to have known about him or was known to Joyce himself.

Can I commend this resource?

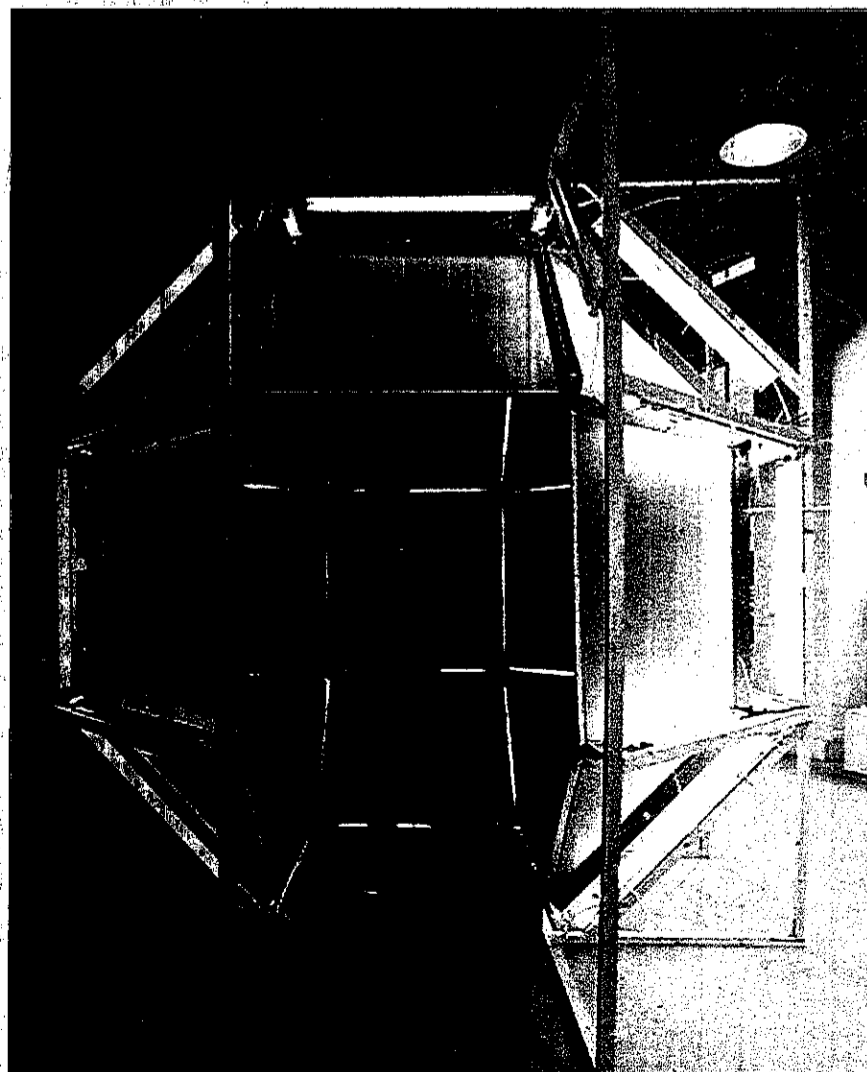
Yours sincerely

Tim Jerram

5 Westville Road, Ilkley, LS29 9AJ

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Davide Cascio, *Polyhedra: A Room in Which to Read Joyce's 'Ulysses'* (2004)