In March 1997, Samuel Beckett’s heirs, Edward Beckett and Caroline Beckett Murphy, generously presented Beckett’s alma mater, Trinity College Dublin, with a substantial collection of his notebooks and manuscripts that had been “discovered in a trunk in his cellar after his death” in 1989 (K, 178). Enclosed in simple brown wrapping paper and carefully labelled “Notes Diverse Holograph” in Beckett’s hand, these manuscripts – for which this is the annotated catalogue – are now preserved in the Manuscripts Department of the College library. Added to a wealth of other Beckett manuscripts belonging to Trinity College Dublin (see Jane Maxwell’s handlist this issue pp. 183-199), they clearly establish Trinity College as home to one of the pre-eminent collections of Beckett manuscripts and they are intimately related to similar manuscripts and notebooks in the collection of the Beckett International Foundation at the University of Reading. Indeed the two collections may be seen as part of a larger whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.

“Notes Diverse Holograph” includes twenty-one manuscripts, ranging in length from a single page containing a typewritten copy of a poem (TCD MS 10971/9) to 267 pages of philosophy notes on both rectos and versos (TCD MS 10967). The manuscripts consist almost entirely of Beckett’s transcriptions, outlines, and summaries of the books he read either during his sophister years as a Trinity undergraduate (1925-1927) or between 1930 and 1936 – a period in which he read intensively. They are, variously, in English, French, Italian, German, and Latin – usually transcribed in the language of the original text. Sur-
prisingly, though spiked with an occasional personal reaction or response, they rarely contain an interpretive appraisal of what he was reading and are almost entirely without assessment or analysis of it. There are no drafts of works in progress or anything resembling a personal diary or journal in the manner of the ‘German diaries’ archived at Reading.

The realization that the notes consisted entirely of reading notes imposed an obligation that had not been foreseen when we began compiling the catalogue and delayed its publication for more than a year. Whenever possible, it became essential to identify not only the source, but in some cases even the edition (or, sometimes, editions) from which Beckett took his notes. We have made a considerable effort in this regard, but, as a perusal of the catalogue will quickly make clear, with maddening lacunae identified throughout as ‘nfi’ – not further identified – blanks for other scholars to fill in. But whenever the notes could be brought together with the source that occasioned them, they came more clearly into focus. Yet, particularly in the earliest manuscripts, since the notes were meant for himself, Beckett did not always feel the need to identify the author or title of the secondary sources being consulted, or he mentions them only incidentally, or sometimes there is an indication buried in the text. In general, it is only in the later, more experienced, notes that Beckett begins to identify his secondary sources. In many instances texts mentioned in the notes are not sources of the notes but are mentioned in the source from which the notes were made, and taken down as a reference for further reading.

Comparison of the notes with their source makes it clear that in organizing them Beckett meticulously follows the text before him, copying chapter titles and subdivisions as topic headings. Thus the appearance of the structural outline at the beginning of the notes on philosophy (TCD MS 10967 fol 1r) makes more sense when it is understood as incorporating the table of contents of his initial source, Archibald Alexander’s *Short History of Philosophy*. (The addition of a second outline (fol 1ar) identified as “Windelband”, indicates the subsequent addition of a second source, Wilhelm Windelband’s *History of Philosophy*). Similarly, when the source could be placed next to the manuscript, it became possible to read words in the manuscript that were problematic or simply illegible.

The earliest manuscripts (TCD MSS 10962 - 10966) clearly date from Beckett’s undergraduate years (1923-1927; TCD MS 10964 is dated, Sept. 3, 1926), and may be keyed to the prescribed reading lists.