

Conference “Mistakes and the study of manuscripts” 2016

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Types of discrepancy, types of text

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Astronomical tables as handwritten objects: errors, corrections and annotations in the Corpus Christi College Ms 283 fol 114- 145

Abstract – Errors and corrections found in manuscripts depend on the type of texts transmitted. Astronomical tables generate specific sets of mistakes, adjustments and marginal notes because of their peculiar layout, their long lists of numbers, and the intricate layers of mathematical, calendrical and astronomical information they convey.

This case study explores how these features of astronomical tables as handwritten objects are attested in the Oxford Corpus Christi College Ms 283. The folios 114 to 145 of this composite manuscript, assembled by William of Clare in the 13th century, were copied at the end of the 12th century. They contain a version of al-Khwarizmi tables as translated by Adelard of Bath. These tables were generously annotated in the 13th century possibly by William of Clare. The various adjustments proposed by the medieval actors on this document attest the scope and depth of their writing practices with astronomical tables. More precisely the analysis of the Sun’s equation tables will help us capture the work of the copyist/compiler of the tables while the reception of this work in a 13th century astronomical context will be addressed through the notes and corrections displayed around the Sun’s and Jupiter’s mean motion tables.