



STORM KNIGHTS

PIXAUD'S PRACTICAL GRIMOIRE

CRITIQUE

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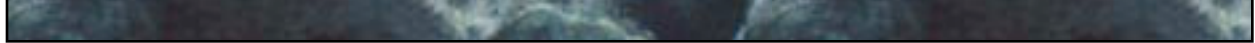
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INTRODUCTION

This is a review of *Pixaud's Practical Grimoire*, in particular comparing the spells in the volume with the spell design rules presented in the *Aysle Sourcebook* and the *Grimoire* itself.

In general, the spells in the *Grimoire* were not well done, and many errors and omissions can be found in the volume. Some of the more common problems included:

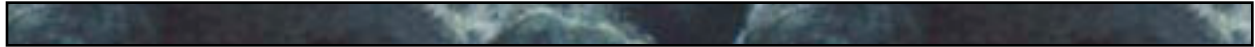
- Many “wards” were not Magic axiom 15- the required axiom for a ward.
- Multiple focused spells aren't Axiom 10, the minimum axiom for focusing.
- Some spells included inconsistent mechanics (or no mechanics).
- Axioms for spells seemed to be determined on a nearly random basis.
- Many descriptions were muddled and unclear, sometimes as to how the mechanics work, sometimes as to the magical theory, sometimes as to what the spell

was meant to do (and many times, all three).

This article includes a review of the pertinent rules, that the correct mechanics may be kept in mind when assessing the spell. It also includes a spell-by-spell breakdown of the *Grimoire* (omitting only those spells for which no comment seemed necessary). One group of spells, those boosting attributes, share common mechanics and differ only according to what attribute they affect, so are addressed as a whole, rather than as individual spells.

The comments list the spell's name, its magical skill/arcane knowledge (*alteration/folk*, etc.), the page reference, and the Magic axiom (Ax:) of the spell.

The spells are (in the main) listed in the same order in which they appear in *Pixaud's*, so one can follow along with the article, comparing the *Grimoire's* text with the commentary.



RULES REVIEW

This is a review of the rules pertaining to impressing, focusing, wards, range and spell effects. Most of the problems in *Pixaud's* arose in connection with these particular mechanics.


The range value of a spell is a relative area. It is centered on the caster, and radiates outward to the full range value. If the caster moves, this area moves with him. The spell effect can only exist within this range. If the spell effect leaves the range of the spell, it expires.

Focusing breaks the link between the range of the spell and the spell effect. Now the spell effect (which is centered on an object or person, called the focus) can leave the range without expiring. Focusing is required when a spell is to affect a static target, such as an area of effect, an object,

or a person (e.g. any Kindred). Focusing a spell has an axiom requirement of 10- all focused spells need to be at least axiom 10 (but can be higher).

When a spell is cast, it goes into affect immediately- the mage cannot "hold" the spell for later. At Axiom 17, it becomes possible to design and cast "impressed" spells, spells that are pre-cast and held in the caster's mind until he chooses to release them. Impressing is required when a.) the spell is to be temporarily stored in the magician, b.) the spell is to be temporarily stored in an object, or c.) the spell is to be temporarily stored in a non-spellcaster.

There are two different rules for building spells which can be placed into items, one of which is on page 73, *Aysle Source-*



book, and allows an impressed spell to be designed which can be placed into an item or a non-spellcaster. The second is on page 80. The second procedure allows the mage to design a spell to allow an item to hold any impressed spell of the appropriate Arcane Knowledge, by infusing the item with *living forces* linked with the elemental knowledge.

ATTRIBUTE BOOSTING SPELLS

There are two kinds of alteration “boosting” spells, modifications and transformations. Modifications are always real. Transformations are illusory, unless they have an Essence as the mechanism.

Modifications boost an attribute value, within limits. The limit is either the Ayslish attribute maximum for that attribute or the current attribute, plus the maximum result from the standard Power Push table (+6) (or Speed Push table, +2, “whichever is appropriate.”)

Thus, a modification can boost your stat to a 19, as long as you have a 13. If you have a Dexterity stat of 7, it can go as high as 14. A transformation has, essentially, no limit other than the Effect Value of the spell.

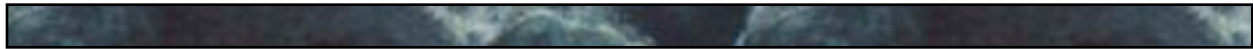
The problem is, every single attribute boosting spell in Pixaud’s has the mechanics of a real transformation. None of them

Impressing a spell requires an axiom of 17, though releasing it has a lower axiom. Wards have an axiom of 15- all wards need to be at least axiom 15 (but can be higher).

A spell which creates multiple objects or creatures still only has one effect. If the spell expires, all objects/creatures disappear.

are modifications (none mention the mechanics of a modification) and none of them are illusory. It seems a stretch to assume that all of them have an Essence mechanism, especially as one (*improved magical strength*, pg. 47) says that the mechanism of the spell is *magic*. (This would make it an illusory transformation, but there is no disbelief Difficulty Number listed, breaking the rules for illusions as well.)

The editors created a whole set of intricate and hard to adjudicate rules for such spells, then proceeded to ignore them. There are seven such spells and none of them use the rules as written. What’s the point of making up endless amounts of rules, if none of the official spells follow them? It seems like a waste of time.



THE ESSENCES

Grave Assistance, *alteration/death*, PPG (10), Ax: 13(17). Transforms *death* energies into skeletal warriors.


This spell is impressive but should be focused as well. The range of the spell is 10 meters, so the skeletons have to remain within that boundary. A focused spell would be more effective, for just 2 points more.

For instance, suppose someone is attacking the magician, from 40 meters away- the mage has to run up to him to let the bodyguards attack. One of the effective tactics for mages and goons is to send the goons up close to the enemy, while the mage artillerizes from a distance. This spell's effectiveness would be far greater if the skeletons can wander freely.

The Secret Service would be damn near useless if they had to stay within 6 meters of the President. Taking a bullet is one thing, but a fireball spell hits everybody. "Go and get 'im" is far more effective. Bodyguards who can leave the range of the spell are far more useful than those which cannot.

Rot of the Grave, *conjunction/death*, PPG (10), Ax: 13. Rots someone (doing damage and coincidentally lowering their *Charisma*) as if they were dead.

This spell breaks the "one effect per spell" rule. Becoming a rotting corpse may lower your *Charisma*, but it also may not. This spell should either do one or the other, not both.



It is also focused, and is a good example of why spells are designed as focused spells. If it weren't focused, the effect would cease as soon as either the victim left the range of the spell.

Talking Dead, *divination/death*, PPG (11), Ax: 8. This spell allows the caster to "contact" a spirit and interrogate it. The Effect Value is compared to the spirit's Spirit on the "Interrogation" chart, which is used to determine the spirit's attitude towards the caster.

This spell has a range of 5 (10 meters), which I would suspect isn't far enough to reach into the afterworld. I would require this spell to at least be a cross-dimensional divination effect, requiring Axiom 13.

The spell misstates the Interrogation and Charm rules. Interrogation doesn't influence an attitude, charm does. Interrogation is a forceful questioning that has to overcome the target's already-present attitudes towards **the subject being inquired about**, not the interrogator.

Also, contacting the spirit and using the Effect Value to affect it is definitely two different effects. The spell should do one or the other, but not both.

This spell should only allow the caster to contact the spirit, with the Effect Value of the spell being the maximum skill total of any social interaction skills the mage chooses to use, once contact is established (see *Pixaud's*, pg. 6). Once contact is established, the mage has a choice of how to interact: use *charm*, *persuasion*, interrogate, etc.

Visions of Death, *conjunction/death*, PPG (11), Ax: 13. Attacks creatures with spiritual damage by summoning *death*-aspected nightmares.

This spell is focused on an object but does not affect the object, it affects a person (probably restricted to *folk*). It does

this by having an area of effect of 100 meters. The spell uses Specific Contagion to restrict the effect to one target, otherwise all people within the area of effect would be attacked. Focused spells with an area of effect radiate the effect of the spell throughout the area of effect. The range of the spell as listed is a typo. A range of 10 is 100 meters, not 10 meters.

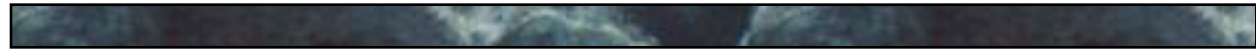
Conjure the Bounding Hordes of Doom, *conjunction/life*, PPG (11), Ax: 13 (17). Creates (or summons?) bouncing "hordelings."

This spell is an example of the munged creation/summoning rules. The mage has control of who the hordelings attack, evidence of some control of summoned/created creatures. If this spell is a summoning spell, the mage should have no control over the hordelings. If it is a creation spell, then it should be focused (should be, not must be), otherwise the hordelings cannot leave the range of the spell. If a created hordeling leaves the range, it and its 5 companions would disappear, as the spell effect would expire.

Create Homunculus, *conjunction/life*, PPG (12), Ax: 13. Enchants a cauldron to create a homunculi.

This spell is focused on the cauldron. This is a creation of life spell, not a summoning spell. It does not have preprogrammed components, but allows the spell to be varied, depending on which components the mage provides. I would have made each separate *create homunculus* spell a different spell, requiring the mage to design a different spell to design a different homunculus (and extrapolated the rules to make a general rule set for creating creatures). This is not a strict rules quibble, just my preference.

Enchanting Growth, *alteration/life*,



PPG (13), Ax: 9. Causes wild growth in plants.

Focused on an area. Axiom is too low, needs to be a 10. (Get used to that comment, you'll be reading it a lot). If not focused, the spell could be as low as a 7.

Hibernation, *alteration/life*, PPG (13), Ax: 8. Suspend animation. Focused spell, axiom is too low, needs to be a 10. If not focused, the spell could be as low as a 7.

Touch of Healing, *alteration/life*, PPG (14), Ax: 8. Accelerates natural processes of a person, in order to heal them. Focused spell, axiom is too low, needs to be a 10. If not focused, the spell could be as low as a 7.

Curse of Infinite Shapes, *alteration/time*, PPG (14). Ax: 10. Randomly become another kindred.

This spell is impressed and focused, but the axiom is wrong. It should be 10 (17). Also notes that if the caster stays within range of the target, they can control the shapeshifting. This spell is the Disney *Sword in the Stone* mage-duel, only in reverse.

Flowers of Frustration, *conjunction/time*, PPG (15), Ax: 13 (17). Rechannels the energy of spells into producing flowers.

This spell, also impressed and focused, also notes that casters who stay within the range still maintain control. This spell apparently creates a field of change, using *time* to change the spells the target casts. This spell should be an *alteration/magic* spell, it would seem more consistent.

Time may involve change, but *alteration* is change and this spell alters other spells, a clear case of *alteration/magic*.

Ravages of Time, *alteration/time*, PPG

(16), Ax: 12. Makes an item age to destruction.

No problems with this spell, but it is one of the few places you can find rules on the *Toughness* of equipment. What's the *Toughness* of a Browning .38 pistol? Look in *Pixaud's*, under this spell. It's so obvious...

Banishment, *conjunction/true knowledge*, PPG (16), Ax: 15. Sends an "entity" back to its home dimension. Mentions that such dimensional spells cannot cross cosm barriers.

Call Forth Spirits of Earth, *conjunction/true knowledge*, PPG (17), Ax: 15. Brings an earth elemental from another dimension.

Is a summoning, not creating spell. Is focused, though does not need to be (focusing just raises the casting cost, without adding any functionality).

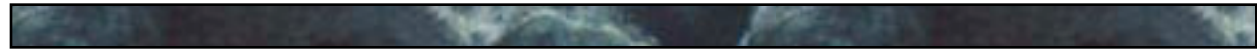
Extradimensional Gate, *conjunction/true knowledge*, PPG (18), Ax: 15. Opens gate to another dimension.

The spell's Effect Value is maximum weight value that can go through at once. Is focused to allow the mage to leave the range of the spell without causing it to expire. Also has the "cannot go to another cosm" notation.

Invisibility, *alteration/true knowledge*, PPG (19), Ax: 12 (17). Makes an individual invisible.

Is, apparently, designed to be impressed into the figurine. Although this could be, as David Oakes pointed out, merely Contagion or Similarity.

Summon Scholar, *conjunction/true knowledge*, PPG (20), Ax: 13. Summons a scholarly spirit from the dimension of scholarly spirits.



This spell needs to be Magic 15 to summon across dimensional barriers (see *call forth spirits of earth*, above, and the *TORG Rulebook*, pg. 93).

Sylph Call, *conjunction/true knowledge*, PPG (21), Ax: 13, Summons a sylph from the dimension of sylphs.

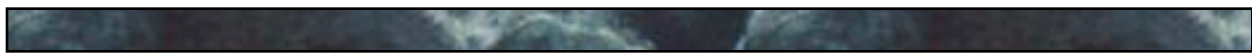
This spell needs to be Magic 15 to summon across dimensional barriers (see *call forth spirits of earth*, above, and the *TORG Rulebook*, pg. 93). Also, this spell and *call forth spirits of earth* are both focused, although *summon scholar* is not.

All 3 spells do the exact same thing—summon (not create!) a being from another dimension. I would say that none of the

three need be focused, and all need Magic 15. Each of these three spells should consistently follow the same rules. Random inconsistencies are proof of poor design and unclear rules.

True Light, *conjunction/true knowledge*, PPG (21), Ax: 15. Summons *true light* (with moral qualities, not just illumination) to light up an area and reveal lies.

Since the moral qualities of light are inherent in that Arcane Knowledge, this spell could be *conjunction/light*. Unless the *conjunction/light* spell used an Essence as the mechanism, it would be illusory. The *conjunction/true knowledge* spell is not illusory.



THE PRINCIPLES

Maungo's Malicious Mastiff, *conjunction/darkness*, PPG (26), Ax: 13 (17). Creates a dog out of darkness and evil thoughts.

This spell gives the caster control of the dog. It can “do only malicious violence”, but the caster can order it attack whom-ever he wills, and can even order it to stop attacking and sit still. This spell could be focused, to allow the dog to leave the 40 m. radius of the spell's effect.

Withering Touch, *conjunction/darkness*, PPG (27), Ax: 12. Reduces *Toughness*, *Strength*, and *Dexterity* of a limb.

The caster casts the spell, then has 6 rounds (the duration) to touch the target with the spell. Once touched, the spell effect occurs and the spell expires. Why is this spell focused? It has no long-term duration, so the victim need not be continually affected (as would be the normal case with focused spells).

Away Sight, *divination/light*, PPG (27),


Ax: 7. See things far away through glass lens.

This spell is all right as written, but has a potentially misleading description. It says that “[t]he spell is focused through a glass lens for the duration.” Since focusing is not bolded, that means it is not a “focused” spell, *vis a vis* the casting method. This line means that the caster looks through the lens to see what the spell will show him. The spell's designer used the lens as a Contagion.

Language Enhancer, *divination/light*, PPG (28), Ax: 9. Effect Value vs. Perception to increase target's *language* skill.

Focused spell, axiom is too low, needs to be a 10. Also, this spell should be an *alteration* spell, not *divination*. *Divination* may allow you to understand someone, but shouldn't “boost” your skill adds. That is analogous to *ritual of mind preparation* and should be *alteration*.

Mage Light, *alteration/light*, PPG (28),



Ax: 12. Causes light to glow from a mirror.

This spell has a muddled description. The description says it is “focused” (“to cast this focused spell”), but the word “focused” isn’t bolded. It should be. It also says that the spell isn’t focused on the required mirror, but what it is focused on isn’t clear. This spell needs to be focused, as it has a range of touch. I would rewrite this spell to have it focused on the mirror, as it is the mirror which emits the spell effect.

Rainbow Bracers, *alteration/light*, PPG (29), Ax: 11. Forms bracelets out of light.

Resists *light* spells. Should be focused (on recipient), as range is touch. Also, this spell is wasteful. It is used to invoke the Principle of Definition, to protect the caster from *light* spells. As long as you’re having a *light* effect hang around, make it useful. Give the target the ability to see in the dark or make him charming or something. Any *light* spell which affects the target would protect against other *light* spells, it might as well be useful. This comment applies to the many *Pixaud’s* spells which mimic or invoke the the Principle of Definition.

Shield of Light, *alteration/light*, PPG (30), Ax: 12. Increases *Mind* and *Spirit* (for purposes of defense only).

In case you’re wondering why *rainbow bracers* needs to be focused, look at this spell. It is focused, because the effect has to stay with the target (as it does with *rainbow bracers*).

Sweet Dreams, *apportation/light*, PPG (30), Ax: 9. Moves the “good”-ness of the *light* arcane knowledge onto a focus character to make good dreams.

Focused spell, axiom is too low, needs to be a 10. In case you’re wondering why

rainbow bracers needs to be focused, look at this spell. It is focused, because the effect has to stay with the target (as it does with *rainbow bracers*).

Zero Light, *apportation/light*, PPG (31), Ax: 9. Repels all light in an area.

This spell does not need to be focused, but if it were (Magic axiom 10), the mage could have the spell effect be stationary, instead of following him.

Carminstabulous’ Conductive Cover, *conjunction/magic*, PPG (31), Ax: 12.

Creates field of electricity to protect target from metal weapons. Focused spell. Another example of why spells with a range of touch need to be focused.

Cast Lasher, *alteration/magic*, PPG (31), Ax: 12 (17). Causes target to take more backlash from casting spells.

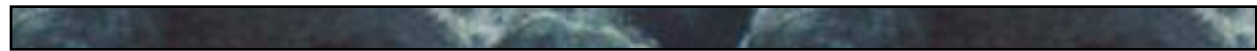
This spell should be focused in order to make it more useful, as the victim can simply leave the range of the spell (60 m) and it will expire. With an Effect Value of 25 and a range of 18, the designer was throwing high costs anyway, an additional 2 points for focusing shouldn’t have made it that much harder to cast.

In particular, building in a high duration is only useful if the target will be affected for the whole duration. Otherwise, it’s a waste. Focusing makes the duration more useful.

Destroy Magic, *alteration/magic*, PPG (31), Ax: 12 (17). Destroys spells in target area. Should have been designed as a focused spell, in order to make it more useful (see *zero light*, above).

Devil’s Pit, *conjunction/magic*, PPG (32), Ax: 15 (17). Creates a pit trap when ward is triggered.

This spell is a ward, so needs an axiom



of 15. But why the (17) in the axiom line? It could be impressed (cast the spell, stop, wait to release the ward until later) but the description does not note it as such. Other wards do not have the (17) notation (except *Maungo's magic message*) and no rule requires it. The Axiom line should be just "Axiom: 15".

Doeleran's Door of Shooting Fire, *conjunction/magic*, PPG (32), Ax: 15.

Ward. Creates jets of fire. An example of a ward without the (17) notation. There are many others.

Enchanted Error, *alteration/magic*, PPG (33), Ax: 13. Cast on an object that has a spell impressed into it, if successful, spell fizzles when triggered.

Focused spell. Another example of why spells with a range of touch need to be focused.

Floor of Binding, *conjunction/magic*, PPG (33), Ax: 12. Creates a sticky field which holds people to floor. Ward, should be Magic axiom 15.

Imprisonment, *conjunction/magic*, PPG (33), Ax: 12. Creates bars made of magical force.

High duration, should have been designed as focused (otherwise the caster needs to remain within the range of 25 m. or the spell expires).

Magic Ladder, *conjunction/magic*, PPG (34), Ax: 12. Forms a ladder from magical energies.

High duration, should have been designed as focused, otherwise the ladder needs to remain within 60 m. (the range) of the caster or the spell expires.

Magic Repulsion, *apportation/magic*,

PPG (34), Ax: 10(17). Pushes magic spells outside of the area of effect.

This spell does not need to be focused, but if it were, the mage could have the spell effect be stationary, instead of following him.

Maungo's Magic Magnet, *apportation/magic*, PPG (34), Ax: 10 (17). Attracts spells into a target.

The writer should have designed this as a focused, impressed spell. The effect of the spell is to move spell effects into a target ball, as long as those spell effects are within the 10 m area of effect. Since the effect has been placed on an object which isn't the target of the spell, it should be focused on that object. Also, the range of the spell is touch, so the spell has to be focused in order to have any effect. This spell is also one of the ones designed to be impressed into an object, with the commensurate convoluted state path.

Maungo's Magic Message, *conjunction/magic*, PPG (34), Ax: 15 (17). Ward. Caster writes letters on a wall or floor. When triggered, message appears.

This spell is a ward, so needs an axiom of 15. But why the (17) in the axiom line? It could be impressed (cast the spell, stop, wait to release the ward until later) but the description does not note it as such. Other wards do not have the (17) notation (except *devil's pit*) and no rule requires it. The Axiom line should be just "Axiom: 15".

Mystic Shield, *conjunction/magic*, PPG (35), Ax: 12. Creates a cone, in which the caster is protected from spells.

Should be focused (on the recipient), as range is touch. (See *Carminstabulous' conductive cover*, *enchanted error*, *sweet dreams*, et. al.)



THE MIXED FORCES

Enchant Armor, *alteration/inanimate forces*, PPG (39), Ax: 10. Boosts max. armor value of a suit of armor.

Should be focused (on the armor), as range is touch. (See *Carminstabulous' conductive cover, enchanted error, sweet dreams*, et. al.)

This spell also misstates the rules on boosting armor and weapons. It should note that the Effect Value is compared to the max. armor value, Power Pushed, remainder added to the max. armor value. This same remainder is Power Pushed again and added to the armor's "adds."

Enchant Bow, *alteration/inanimate forces*, PPG (39), Ax: 10. Boosts max damage value of a bow.

Should be focused (on the bow), as range is touch. (See *Carminstabulous' conductive cover, enchanted error, sweet dreams*, et. al.)

This spell also misstates the rules on boosting weapons. It should note that the Effect Value is compared to the max. dam-

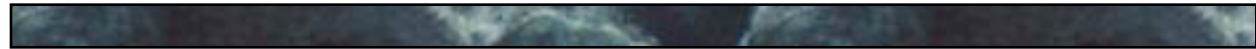
age, Power Pushed, remainder added to the max. damage. This same remainder is Power Pushed again and added to the weapon's "adds."

Glue, *conjunction/inanimate forces*, PPG (40), Ax: 12. Creates sticky substance over a wide area. This spell is focused, so caster can walk away and leave the effect running behind him.

Light Armor, *alteration/inanimate forces*, PPG (41), Ax: 11. Makes glowing armor out of light. This spell is fine as written, but in order to cast the *light armor* on someone else, the spell would have to be focused.

Prismatic Alteration, *alteration/inanimate forces*, PPG (42), Ax: 8. Hampers skills of target.

This spell either needs a larger range (so as to be able to build in an area of effect) or it needs to be focused (so the effect does not radiate from the caster outward).



Storm Kill, *apportation/inanimate forces*, PPG (42), Ax: 9 (17). Oddball weather control spell. This spell has a 5 km area of effect, although it is described poorly.

Also, Zelephest is more confused than usual. First, he question whether the creation of this spell is worth it, then he mentions the astronomical fees involved in paying its creators to cast it. A spell which nets its creators astronomical fees *is* worth the time. You can face down a dragon and try to steal its hoard, or you can cast a spell to tame a storm, for the same amount of trades. Really high backlash, though.

Telekinesis Major, *apportation/inanimate forces*, PPG (43), Ax: 6 (17). Gives *telekinesis* spell to non-spellcasters.

Example of a spell which is impressed into non-spellcasters. This spell claims that it is impressed and focused, although the focusing isn't required. If it were focused, it should be 10 (17), not 6 (17).

Charm Person, *conjunction/living forces*, PPG (44), Ax: 11. Attempts to charm a person (any Kindred).

This spell has a range of 2.5 meters, for no apparent reason. It is designed to affect the caster or, presumably, someone else the caster wishes to make more charming. If it affects just the caster, give it a range of "Self." If it is designed to affect someone else, give it a longer range or make it focused.

Others have noted that the spell could replace the caster's *charm* skill with the spell's Effect Value for the duration of the spell, as long as the target was within the 2.5 m. This seems needlessly complicated, but is a possible interpretation.

Command Obedience, *alteration/living forces*, PPG (44), Ax: 10 (17). Compels

obedience.

An example of a focused, impressed spell which is 10 (17). Also, the mechanics of this spell seem out of place. It compels nearly-complete obedience unless the target makes a *Mind* or *willpower* total which exceeds the Effect Value. In line with the other spells, Effect Value vs. *Mind* or *willpower*, read as a *persuasion* (or *intimidate*), high result means target complies.

Diminished Senses, *alteration/living forces*, PPG (45), Ax: 8. Lowers target's *Perception*.

One bad effect: this isn't focused, so if the target can get further away from the caster than 40 m (the range of the spell) the spell effect expires. If this spell were focused (Ax: 10) then it would be more effective. See the next two spells (*enhance aura* and *facade of normality*).


Enhanced Aura, *alteration/living forces*, PPG (45), Ax: 9 (17). Raises *Charisma*, *Spirit*. Is focused and impressed, so axiom should be 10 (17). The effect is focused on the target character, so they can leave the range without causing the spell to expire.

Facade of Normality, *alteration/living forces*, PPG (45), Ax: 9 (17). Renders target inconspicuous.

Is focused and impressed, so axiom should be 10 (17). The effect is focused on the target character, so they can leave the range without causing the spell to expire.

First Aid, *alteration/living forces*, PPG (46), Ax: 8. Spell is used as first aid (removes shock, K or O, and stops bleeding).

This spell is listed as focused, so the axiom should have been a 10. Though, it doesn't have to be focused. The duration is only 10 seconds, so the mage can stay within 15 meters for that length of time,



especially as the spell uses concentration (the mage wouldn't be doing anything else anyway). I would leave the Axiom at 8, and not focus the spell.

Gain Sense, *alteration/living forces*, PPG (46), Ax: 9. Grants eyes of hawk, nose of dog, etc.

The spell's Effect Value is added directly to the mage's *Perception*. This is wrong. It should be Effect Value. vs. *Perception*, read through Power Push table, add result to *Perception* for chosen sense (see *improved dexterity*, etc.). Even if the mechanism were magic, it would be Effect Value vs. *Perception*, add result points to *Perception*. Either way, the description is wrong on that point. Also, focused spell, axiom is too low, needs to be a 10.

Improved Dexterity, *alteration/living forces*, PPG (46), Ax: 9. Boosts target's *Dexterity*. Focused spell, axiom is too low, needs to be a 10.

Improved Magical Strength, *alteration/living forces*, PPG (47), Ax: 9. Boosts *Strength*. Focused spell, axiom is too low, needs to be a 10.

Murgee's Energy Drain, *apportation/living forces*, PPG (47), Ax: 10 (17). Transfers energy from a target to the caster.

This spell has so many problems, its hard to know where to begin. According to the example, this spell actually heals damage already taken, instantly- a no-no for magic.

It violates the "one effect" rule, it has three different effects! It damages a target, allows the caster to take extra damage and heals damage the caster has already taken.

The description is vague and confusing. The example confuses skill total and Effect

Value with Result Points. It has an odd mechanic- the spell must exceed the target's *Toughness* by 2 to work. It adds in a Result Point modifier before reading through the Power Push (when result Point modifiers are designed to be added in after the Result Points are Power Pushed).

This is quite possibly the worst spell in the whole book.

(These next two spells are slightly out of order.)

Persuasion, *conjuration/living forces*, PPG (48), Ax: 11. Persuades a target.

Suggestion, *conjuration/living forces*, PPG (48), Ax: 10. Persuades a target.

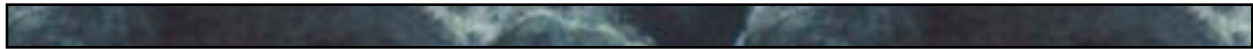
Both of these spells do exactly the same thing with exactly the same mechanics (Effect Value vs. *Mind* or *willpower* of target, results read on Charm/Persuasion column.) Why do they have a different axiom requirement?

In addition, as Ks. Jim has noted, *suggestion* claims that *darkness* is used as the mechanism knowledge "so the creature's welfare or interests do not affect the casting of the spell." This is a nonsensical claim, and evidence of a munged State Path system.

Sixth Sense, *divination/living forces*, PPG (48), Ax: 6 (17). Spell replaces *find* skill. Is focused and impressed, so axiom should be 10 (17).

Vigor, *alteration/living forces*, PPG (49), Ax: 9. Boosts *Toughness*.

This spell is very nearly done right. Mechanics of boost are done correctly (Effect Value v. *Toughness*, read result points through the Power Push table, add them, plus a result modifier, to the original *Toughness*) and the spell is even focused. Therein lies the problem. Focused spell, axiom is too low, needs to be a 10.



THE KINDRED

Hatchery, *alteration/aquatic*, PPG (51), Ax: 9. This spell has three distinct effects- it attracts fish to a location, convinces them to mate, and boosts the “vitality” of the offspring (it’s the “date rape” spell for fish).

I know this spell is basically irrelevant in the larger scheme of TORG, but it is still a rules violation. One spell, one effect.

Communicate with Birds, *divination/avian*, PPG (51), Ax: 7. Boosts *Perception* for purposes of talking with birds using the *language* skill.


What this spell really does is to utilize the “send information” aspect of *divination magic* to allow the caster to give information to birds, as long as they are within the radius of the spell. Ks. Jim also notes that

exclusion has probably been applied, as the spell affects only birds and not other avian creatures.

Fly, *apportation/avian*, PPG (53), Ax: 8. Allows somebody to fly.

Other than the question of just what is being apported (the bird’s ability to fly?), comes my favorite comment: Focused spell, axiom is too low, needs to be a 10. This is the *Dumbo* spell. (“Honest, the magic feather was just a gag!”)

Animal Shield, *alteration/earthly*, PPG (54), Ax: 8 (17). Creates an area of effect which has a *test* value against animals. Is focused and impressed, so axiom should be 10 (17).



Communicate with Animals, *divination/earthly*, PPG (54), Ax: 7. Boosts *Perception* for purposes of talking with animals using the *language* skill.

Range is touch, so it either only affects the caster (and could be self) or it should be focused (with an axiom of 10). Like *language enhancer* (above), this spell should be an *alteration* spell, not *divination*. *Divination* may allow you to understand someone, but shouldn't "boost" your skill adds. That is analogous to *ritual of mind preparation* and should be *alteration*.

Enhance Horse, *alteration/earthly*, PPG (54), Ax: 9. Raises *Dexterity*, *Toughness*, and *Speed* limit value on a horse.

This spell has a range of touch, so needs to be focused (with an axiom of 10). Either that, or have the range increased so that the horse can fit within the range of the spell.

Insect Repellant, *alteration/earthly*, PPG (55), Ax: 8. Creates an area of effect which has a *test* value against insects. Focused spell, axiom is too low, needs to be a 10.

Paralyzation, *alteration/earthly*, PPG (55), Ax: 8. Lowers animal's *Dexterity*.

Is not focused (and notes that if the animal leaves the range it is no longer affected) but incorrectly claims that if the creature reenters the spell's range, the spell will resume. Once the target leaves the range, the spell expires.

Scarebeast, *alteration/earthly*, PPG (55), Ax: 10. Scares away animals.

This spell almost certainly needs to be focused, unless the caster intends to camp out within the affected area for the whole week the spell lasts.

Tame Horse, *alteration/earthly*, PPG (57), Ax: 9 (17). Spell charms a horse. Is focused and impressed, so axiom should be 10 (17).

Winged Horse, *alteration/earthly*, PPG (57), Ax: 13. Transforms a normal horse into a pegasus. Is not focused, but has range of touch, so needs to be.

Conjure Elemental, *conjunction/elemental*, PPG (57), Ax: 15. Brings any type of elemental from another dimension to this one.

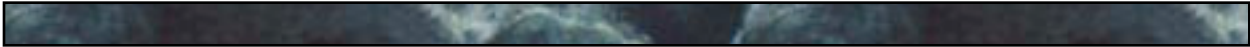
This spell is nearly identical to *summon sylph*, *summon scholar*, and *call forth spirits of earth*. It does not match the other three spells, so an inconsistency lurks somewhere. It is axiom 15 and is not focused, so, of the four, it alone seems written correctly (although the description needs rewriting).

Baby-Sitter, *conjunction/enchanted*, PPG (59), Ax: 9 (17). Charms an enchanted creature.

This spell conjures an emotion in the mind of an enchanted creature. Like all conjurations, the emotions need to be supported by an active spell effect or they will fade (hence the four hour duration). However, unless the mage wishes to sit with the enchanted creature (unlikely, since it is supposed to be a guardian/babysitter for a child) it should be focused and hence be Axiom 10 (17).

Banish Dragon, *apportation/enchanted*, PPG (59), Ax: 8 (17). Repels dragons.

This spell is included as an example of a muddled description. The spell uses its Effect Value to "overcome the *willpower* of dragons and create an aversion to the caster". The description should clearly state how that is done, but does not. My



suggestion would be to compare the spell's Effect Value vs. the dragon's *Mind* or *test*, read the results on the Test column, with a Player's Call result meaning that the dragon avoids the caster. You could also use *intimidation* or *persuasion*.

Control Lycanthropy, *alteration/enchanted*, PPG (59), Ax: 11. Forces werewolf to return to human form.

This spell seems designed to counteract the Ayslish "turn to wolf on the full moon" type of werewolf, as the duration is one day. With a duration of that long, either the caster needs to stay within 40 m. (the range) or this spell needs to be focused. I would suggest focusing this spell.

Speak to Enchanted, *divination/enchanted*, PPG (59) Ax: 8. Speak to an enchanted being.

At the very least, an example of inconsistency (compare this spell's mechanics to *communicate with animals*, *language enhancer*, and *communicate with birds*). As well, this spell should be an *alteration* spell, not *divination*. *Divination* may allow you to understand someone, but shouldn't "boost" your skill adds. That is analogous to *ritual of mind preparation* and should be *alteration*.

Train Pegasus, *alteration/enchanted*, PPG (60), Ax: 10. Speeds up the training of a pegasus.

This spell has an Effect Value of 59(!) with Backlash 19 and Difficulty 17. This spell could just as easily be a *fireball* or *mystic star*. The fact that such an Effect Value can be built into a spell, using the Ayslish spell design system, is one of the reasons that I think that the design system is broken- if you roll high enough, you can build the Death Star-esque *planetbuster* spell, for a mere 12 difficulty and 13 backlash. I much prefer my more mechanistic

SFX adaptation (still in progress). At least spells with a 59 Effect Value would have much higher difficulty and backlash, or some other compensating attributes.

Animate Golem, *conjunction/entity*, PPG (60), Ax: 15. Brings a statue to life.

This spell suffers from the same murky description as much of the rest of the book. Is it "summoning" a spirit to inhabit the statue (as the second paragraph suggests) or is it giving life to the lifeless? We have the mechanics, which is fine for using the spell, but without clearer descriptions, it is much harder to "extend the art" and create new spells, a problem illustrated by the list's interminable arguments about spells such as this.

Animate Skeletal Warrior, *conjunction/entity*, PPG (61), Ax: 15 (17). Animates a skeleton.


Conjunction/life is the spell to create any "truly living being." Is an Undead entity "truly living?" In the context of tool using Living/Unliving Everlaw of One dichotomy, the answer seems most assuredly to be a yes. However, *alteration/death* is the pattern for reanimating the dead (*Aysle Sourcebook*, pg. 63.) This spell should be *alteration/death*.

Bind Demon, *conjunction/entity*, PPG (61), Ax: 17. Attempts to charm a demon.

The axiom level of *bind demon* is way to high. It should be an 11 or so. In fact, it's probably an 11 (17), since it is impressed.

Also, this spell has two effects- it both charms and persuades, a no-no.

Why does charming an entity require a higher Magic axiom than charming an elemental (*charm elemental*, Ax: 11) or persuading any kindred (*persuasion*, Ax: 11 and *suggestion*, Ax: 10) or driving someone mad (*Maungo's mind madness*,



Ax: 14) or a spell which can charm any kindred (*charm person*, Ax: 11) or a spell which can compel any kindred to obey (*command obedience*, Ax: 10), or a spell which charms a bird (Ax: 8), or a spell which charms a horse (*tame horse*, Ax: 9), or a spell which charms an enchanted creature (*babysitter*, Ax: 9) or a spell which controls a golem (*control golem*, Ax: 13)?

Just to analyze, charming any kindred (Ax: 11) is harder than compelling any kindred to obey (Ax: 10) and persuading any kindred is harder (Ax: 11), wait, no easier (also Ax: 10). Any why are spells which charm everything (Ax: 11) a lower axiom than one which only charms a demon (Ax: 17)? This is a similar mess to the various *summon foo* spells, earlier.

Most of these spells (save *Maungo's mind madness*) have similar effects, yet their axioms are all over the chart. In my mind, this confusion closely resembles random axiom assignments. As a game-master, where would you place a new spell which charmed only, say aquatic lifeforms? With birds (Ax: 8) or horses (Ax: 9) or somewhere else? An unknown system which cannot be discerned is not useful. It is simpler just to marshall the effects, sort them into similar categories, and produce an axiom chart. (Which is what I am doing.)

Control Golem, *conjunction/entity*, PPG (62), Ax: 13 (17). Controls (charms and persuades) a golem.

This spell has two effects: it charms and persuades. Also, see above for the axiom of charming/persuading. This spell should be an 11, no greater.

Raise Skeleton, *conjunction/entity*, PPG (63), Ax: 15 (17). Animates all skeletons within range (assuming Effect Value is high enough). Should be *alteration/death*. Also, should be focused.

Raise Zombie, *conjunction/entity*, PPG (63), Ax: 15 (17). Animates one zombie. Should be *alteration/death*. Also, should be focused.

Summon Demon, *conjunction/entity*, PPG (63), Ax: 15. Brings demon from another dimension. Once again, axiom 15, not focused (cf. *summon scholar*, *summon sylph*, et. al.).

Folk Repelspell, *alteration/folk*, PPG (66), Ax: 10. Repels folk spells.

This spell is an example of the munged Principle of Definition (which I haven't mentioned so far, because it isn't a problem confined to *Pixaud's*). Some spells cite "casting total" others "skill total" and yet others Effect Value. The *Revised and Expanded TORC Rulebook* cleared this up, but it shouldn't have happened in the first place.


In addition, this spell is another "wasted" defense spell. Instead of learning and casting this offal, use *strength* or *boost dexterity* or something else. Same defensive value, but you get a benefit from it.

Gain Language, *divination/folk*, PPG (66), Ax: 7. Learn language from an individual.

This spell should be an *alteration spell*, not *divination*. *Divination* may allow you to understand someone, but shouldn't "boost" your skill adds. That is analogous to *ritual of mind preparation* and should be *alteration*.

Haste, *alteration/folk*, PPG (66), Ax: 9. Increases character's speed. Focused spell, axiom is too low, needs to be a 10.

Houndscent, *alteration/folk*, PPG (66), Ax: 9. Gives smell acuity of a dog. The spell's Effect Value is compared to the tar-



get's *Perception*, read on Power Push table, adds to *Perception* for purposes of smelling. Focused spell, axiom is too low, needs to be a 10.

Jump, *alteration/folk*, PPG (67), Ax: 6. Alters long jump skill. Focused spell, axiom is way too low, needs to be a 10.

Silence, *alteration/folk*, PPG (68), Ax: 9. Silences target. Would be a more generally useful spell if it were focused (axiom 10).

Slow, *alteration/folk*, PPG (68), Ax: 9. Slows target. Focused spell, axiom is too low, needs to be a 10.

Snail Wit, *alteration/folk*, PPG (69), Ax: 9. Decreases *Perception*. Would be a more generally useful spell if it were fo-

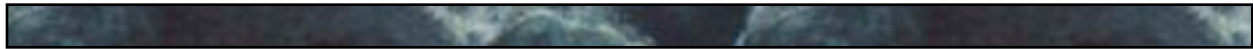
cused (axiom 10).

Stealth Walk, *alteration/folk*, PPG (69), Ax: 9. Boosts *stealth* skill. Focused spell, axiom is too low, needs to be a 10.

Strength, *alteration/folk*, PPG (69), Ax: 9. Boosts *Strength*. Would be a more generally useful spell if it were focused (axiom 10).

Summon Hero, *conjunction/folk*, PPG (69), Ax: 17. Transforms one individual into a hero from the past. Should be *alteration/folk*. Also, should be focused.

Weakness, *alteration/folk*, PPG (70), Ax: 9. Reduces target's *Strength*. Would be a more generally useful spell if it were focused (axiom 10).



THE ELEMENTS

Wall of Air, *alteration/air*, PPG (75), Ax: 8 (17). Builds barrier out of air. Impressed, focused (on area of effect). Is focused and impressed, so axiom should be 10 (17).

Dust to Water, *alteration/earth*, PPG (76), Ax: 9. Changes dust to water. This spell needs to either have a range or be focused.

Earth Shield, *apportation/earth*, PPG (76) Ax: 8. Shapes earth into wall. This spell needs to either have a range or be focused.


Earthy Arms, *alteration/earth*, PPG (76), Ax: 9. Causes a patch of earth to sprout arms. This spell should be focused,

otherwise the caster has to remain at the center of the effect.

Also, in order to be consistent with the mechanics of alteration magic, the spell should have the *Toughness* of the patch of ground, compare Effect Value to *Toughness* (and *Strength*), read on Power Push table. The Toughness of a patch of ground is equal to its weight value.

Quicksand, *alteration/earth*, PPG (77), Ax: 8. Turns earth into mud. This spell definitely should be focused, otherwise the caster himself will sink!

Quixal's Awful Burial, *apportation/earth*, PPG (77), Ax: 8 (17). Flips a patch of earth over (pancake-like).



Is focused and impressed, so axiom should be 10 (17). Also, the spell either needs to have a longer range or a smaller area of effect. As it is, the caster will be standing on the patch of earth as it flips. This, it should be pointed out, is less than useful.

Atlack's Instant Immolation, *conjunction/fire*, PPG (78), Ax: 12. Creates pillar of fire. Why isn't it the same axiom as *conjured fireball*?

Conjured Fireball, *conjunction/fire*, PPG (78), Ax: 13 (17). Ball of fire go boom! Why not same axiom as *Atlack's instant immolation*?

Flame Summons, *conjunction/fire*, PPG (79), Ax: 12. Lights a flammable object on fire. Back to Ax: 12 again. Why not 13?

(These next four spells are slightly out of order.)

Altered Fireball, *alteration/fire*, PPG (78), Ax: 10. Makes small fire go boom!

Altered Fireball (Improved), *alteration/fire*, PPG (78), Ax: 10. Makes small fire go boom!

Flickering Fire Shield, *alteration/fire*, PPG (79), Ax: 11. Causes small flame to move from a fire source and appear on hand of recipient. Resists *fire* spells. (Insert rant on useful defensive spells.)

Ochial's Flaming Circle, *alteration/fire*, PPG (79), Ax: 9. Circle of fire that hurts people.

So, to analyze these spells, making a small bit of fire explode into a big area is axiom 10, placing a small bit of fire on your hand is 11, and making a big circle that grows and shrinks is a 9. The lack of

consistency should be obvious.

Dagger Draw, *conjunction/metal*, PPG (80), Ax: 12. Creates a throwing dagger.

Should be focused, otherwise the dagger will disappear as soon as it is thrown. Also, if the gamemaster is using the "Tech" rules (see the *Tharkold Sourcebook*, re: *laser armor* and *muzzle booster*) then this spell should have a Tech requirement of no less than 7. Similar rules would apply to *armor of the draconis metallica* and other spells.

Ks. Jim pointed out that a spell which summons a dagger (not a throwing dagger) would be vicious. The dagger could be used to attack, then dropped. The conjunction spell would expire as soon as the mage is no longer holding the dagger, and the dagger will disappear, leaving no trace of the weapon.

Dagger Throw, *apportation/metal*, PPG (80), Ax: 7. Throws dagger at target. Focused spell, axiom is way too low, needs to be a 10.

Also, it seems as if the writers intended this spell to be used in conjunction with the previous spell (*dagger draw*), yet it cannot. The throwing dagger created with *dagger draw* is supported by an active spell effect, so it clearly is "being affected" by a metal spell, and cannot have another metal spell active on it (cf. Principle of Definition). If this spell is cast on the dagger and overcomes the Principle of Definition, the spell effect supporting the existence of the dagger is dispelled, and the dagger disappears.

A *conjunction/metal* version of this spell could be created which, like *fireball*, would be an attack spell. Such a spell wouldn't need focusing, but could use a longer range.

Keen Blade, *alteration/metal*, PPG (81),



Ax: 10. Increases Damage Value and max. damage value of a blade.

This spell should be focused, otherwise it will end when the caster stops touching the blade. Also, this spell misstates the rules on increasing max. damage and damage “adds.” (See *enchant armor* and *enchant bow*, et. al.)

Open Lock, *apportation/metal*, PPG (82), Ax: 6. Opens metal lock. Should have Tech requirement.

It should be noted that this spell can only unlock mechanical, metal locks. Many hotel locks are electronic or magnetic or even composed of plastic or other high-tech composite materials. Akashan locks are bio-tech. This spell is useless on those. Ks. Jim pointed out that *apportation/inanimate forces* could open any lock composed of the elements.

Precious Metal Plate, *divination/metal*, PPG (82), Ax: 6. Tell one metal from another. Focused spell, axiom is way too low, needs to be a 10.

Plant Shackles, *alteration/plant*, PPG (83), Ax: 8. Uses plants to entangle a target. Could also be *apportation/plant*. Would be a more generally useful spell if it were focused (axiom 10).

Thorn Staff, *alteration/plant*, PPG (84), Ax: 8. Changes wooden staff to have thorns. This spell should be focused (axiom 10), otherwise it will end when the caster stops touching the staff.

However, Jim pointed out that “[t]he lack of focusing could be a built-in safeguard, if an opponent disarms you and takes away the staff he ends up with just a normal staff, not a magically-boosted one.”

Tree Ward, *alteration/plant*, PPG (84), Ax: 9. Causes tree to light up if characters enter area of effect.

A ward, so needs to be no less than axiom 15. Also, says is a “focused” ward, except that all wards are focused. “Wards are spells which have been focused and impressed into an object.” (*Aysle Sourcebook*, pg. 59.)

Corgain’s Gill Spell, *alteration/water*, PPG (85), Ax: 9. Grants *folk* ability to breathe underwater. Focused spell, axiom is too low, needs to be a 10.

Frost Hair, *alteration/water*, PPG (85), Ax: 11. Freezes water to hair. (Used to defend against *water* spells.) This spell needs to be focused. Also, insert protective spell rant.

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