

How Owen Describes Sequencing — in His Own Words

Pulled from Owen's decoded volumes (the “Letter to the Decipherer,” Vol. I, and a story-preface in Vol. III). These are Owen's own statements of how fragments are linked and ordered. Minor OCR run-ons corrected in brackets; wording otherwise verbatim.

Key words as navigational guides (Vol. I)

*“But you, under the guidance of the **key words** — which are placed like **lamps in the highest window of the house's top, to give light unto the pilot aboard the ship, and show him the way** that he, in the mist and fog, may **follow the straight passage** between the submarine rocks...”*

Owen's core claim: the key words are beacons that show the decipherer “the way” — the sequence is meant to be lit up by the key words like a lighthouse.

Joining reveals “the links of the chain” (Vol. I)

*“...make a collection or catalogue of them, they will serve to show you and the world (as you join them together) the **threads, fibers, and links of the chain**, and our invention is, by the **simple index of our works**, laid open...”*

Sequencing is framed as following the “links of the chain,” located by “the index of our works.”

But the pieces arrive OUT of order — the “workman” must frame them (Vol. I)

*“...work out the cipher. The threads and fibres, which are in little heaps or mole-hills, **not in order, but scattered here and there**, ready to be set up and framed, **must be carefully investigated, and the workman must perform his part** with industry, diligence, and, we may say, religious care.”*

This is the honest admission: the fragments come **scattered, not in order**, and the **decipherer (“the workman”)** **actively sets up and frames them**. Owen concedes the reconstruction is the decoder's labor.

Each story has its own “principal key-words” (Vol. III)

*“The **principal key-words in this story** are: Ocean, Sea, the Vessel, Carract, Galley, Storm, Tempest, Armado, Spain... [when these words are] brought together rightly [they form] the connected narrative.”*

Confirms the labelling/category concept in Owen's own language: a story is defined by a set of key-words, and the passages under them, “brought together rightly,” make “the connected narrative.”

Reading

Owen's answer to “how is the sequence determined”: the **key words guide it** (lamps / index / links of a chain). But his own words also concede the pieces are **scattered, not in order**, and that the **workman must set them up and frame them** into a “connected narrative” — i.e., the decipherer supplies the arrangement, judging when it is “brought together rightly.” That judgment criterion is exactly the freedom our null-model test measured: the actual ordering carried no signal beyond random ($p = 0.46$). Owen's language (“guidance,” “lamps”) claims the text leads; his own qualifiers (“scattered,” “the workman must perform his part,” “rightly”) locate the ordering in the decipherer.