

The Masks List as Candidate Corpus

A cross-validation prediction · August 2026 · source: gorhambury.org/public/exhibits/masks-of-sir-francis-bacon/ (Margaret Barsi-Greene, 1973 — the "Hundred Masks") · Cryptographic Audit series

Walter's conditional assumption

The masks list marks where the **Biliteral** cipher's hidden signatures are claimed to be found (~95–100 pseudonyms including Shakespeare, Marlowe, Milton, Spenser, Jonson; Gallup counted 100+ signatures). The assumption — *not to be taken unconditionally* — is that the **Word** Cipher's source works may be found there too, under the Baconian pseudonyms.

Why the assumption is logically motivated

Dispersal requires control: Bacon could only distribute fragments of the original narrative into texts he controlled — his own works and his masks'. So the masks list is the natural **candidate corpus** for the source works of the Dispersal Hypothesis. The two ciphers remain separate silos in mechanism, but should share a footprint: both depend on who controlled which texts.

The cross-validation test — never runnable before the scan

Line of evidence	Origin	Independence
The Source-Document Catalog	Empirical — Owen's physical cut-and-paste choices, Detroit, 1890s, read off the digitized canvas	Cannot be manufactured from the masks list
The masks list	Derived from the OTHER cipher's claimed signatures (Gallup → Barsi-Greene)	Cannot be manufactured from the canvas

Prediction: if canvas fragments come predominantly from masks-list works, that convergence is striking evidence neither line could fabricate from the other. If they don't overlap, the assumption fails — informatively.

Cautions (audit honesty)

- **Provenance:** the masks list rests on biliteral decodings whose reproducibility was disputed. It enters the audit as a hypothesis-generating **prior**, never ground truth.
- **Circularity guard:** never use the masks list to define the null corpora in the signal-vs-null test. The masks list predicts; the canvas catalog decides.