… The Quarrel betwixt Ignorance and Knowledge is of a very antient Date, and began even in Greece it self, tho’ it must be own’d with a far different Success to what modern Times have discover’d.

In Greece, there appear’d the Authors of the Thesiads, Heracliads, the little Illias, and several other Poems of that Nature, without Design, Order or Beauty; I mean, there wanted those Perfections, which that Nation, whose taste was Soveraignly fine, thought necessary to a compleat Poem, but nothing of those Authors remains, but in their Condemnation by Aristotle, notwithstanding which a certain Coxcomb nam’d Chœrilus, who with out Art and Nature would needs be writing a Poem, and that in Athens it self, but what was his Fate? Why the Athenians ordered him for about a Dozen good Lines in it, to receive a piece of Gold for every one of them, but for every bad Line in the same Poem, condemn’d him to receive a good swinging Buffet by the Executioner, or common Hangman of that City, insomuch, that the Gold he receiv’d for his good Verses, was not sufficient to pay the Chirurgeon for the Bruises and Contusions he had receiv’d for his bad Ones; the Severity of which Judgment kept the Scribblers and Poetasters of Greece in such Awe, that we find no more Instances of the presumption of Ignorance, against Art and Knowledge, even to the Declention, I might say to the total Extirpation of that Glorious Nation.

In Rome the Impudence of Scribblers reviv’d with more Success, for in the time of Virgil and Horace themselves, we find upon Record three or four of these Mob and popular Writers, who set up to rival those great Poets in Reputation, that is Bavius, Navius, Fannius, and that impertinent Mortal, who met and teaz’d Horace upon the sacred Way, but whether these Roman Scribblers were such Ignorant, Scoundrels, such shameless Contemners of Art, as Sir John Edgar, and most of the popular Writers in our Age and Nation, or whether they were Pretenders to Arts, which they did not understand, is what at this distance, we cannot certainly determine.

In the time of Persius we find one Labio cry’d up by the many, but condemn’d by the Judges, particularly by Persius himself; after him appear’d Martial, who has ever since been the Patron and Leader of all the Wou’d-be-wits and ignorant Pretenders to Writing in every Age, since, especially in England, down to the present Reign of Sir John Edgar; for tho’ this Author has been pleas’d to take most, if not all his Mottos out of Virgil and Horace, yet there is not one of them to his Purpose, or can persuade us to believe that even he understands what he Quotes, and he had much better have taken his Text from Martial or Owen, than from either of these two great Roman Poets, who, were they living, must by their Writings have the utmost Contempt for him.

Thus we have seen how the state of Dispute was in Athens and Rome, and I have purposely omitted Italy and France, to which last I consign Scalliger even for brevities sake, it being sufficient to observe, that Ignorance in those Nations as well as others, has all along been a declar’d Enemy to Knowledge and Art, and has never wanted among the vulgar People enow to espouse her Cause, but in no Nation has ever found so numerous a Party as in England: Here Learned and Judicious Authors
in the politer Arts, especially in Poetry, are seldom or never Popular, at least in their own times, but the taking and ignorant Scribblers always very numerous, and very loud and unanimous against Art, as we shall see in the Sequel.

But there have at several times, especially since the Restauration, appear’d several eminent Persons against the prevailing Poetasters of the times, as Mr. Clifford, of the Charter-House, Dr. Spratt, Bishop of Rochester, the Authors of the Rehearsal, and the excellent Essay on Poetry, Mr. Rimer, Mr. Dennis, and some others who have made it their generous Endeavour to defend Art and Sciences, and discover the false pretences to Reputation of Poetasters, built on the worthless Applause of the Ignorant, which has rais’d the united Clamour of Scribblers against them, as ill-natur’d Persons who envied that Success in others, that they could not obtain themselves, grossly mistaking Indignation for Envy, since they never met with any Disappointment in their Endeavours, because, according to Horace’s Advice, they never labour’d to please the Mob, but as they writ to Men of Sense, Learning, and Art, so they have never fail’d of Obtaining their Applause, one of whose Votes, according to Shakespear, is worth a hundred Audiences of the Million.

Among these heroick Champions for Art, there has lately appear’d one whom I shall here call Horatius Truewit, who has, with a great deal of Force, Poinancy, and Vigour, attack’d the very ring-leader of Scribbling and Ignorance, in the Person of one Sir John Edgar, alias Sir R--- S---; the Knight was not a little allarm’d at so strenuous an Onset, for it touch’d him even to Tears as himself confesses, but having consider’d (which indeed is a thing he very seldom does) that the Consequence of this Author’s Writing might be to make him outlive his Works; Old as he is, like several other Writers of his Form and Capacity, who, tho’ they carry’d the Vogue of the Town for a while, have liv’d to see their Applauded Works under Pyes, lining Trunks, wrapping up Tobacco, and several other such Uses with Contempt and Infamy.

Sir John therefore thought some vigorous Resolutions were to be taken to prevent a threatening Evil, which he saw by too many Examples before his Eyes, might otherwise befall him, determin’d to put the Whole upon one Push, and to destroy his Enemies by united Numbers, and oppress Horatius Truewit, and the small Number of his Friends, and make them fall in Battle under the unequal Force of so powerful an Army as he cou’d soon get together.

To this Purpose he sent out his Circular Letters to all parts of the Town, to summon his Brother Scribblers together, in order to accomplish this great Event, but as this was the Cause of Ignorance, so he thought he could have no better Omen to his Success, than to obtain the Favour and Protection of the Goddess who presides over that, and therefore he summon’d all the Rabble of Writers to make a personal Appearance at her Court, in order to adjust the several Commands of the Army, and take her Directions.

Tho’ Ignorance spread her despotick Sway thro’ all parts, and her Empire be large and wide, yet she has peculiar Places of Abode, among which none is more belov’d by her than London, that is her Favourite Samos, and tho’ here she has several considerable Palaces, which I shall not in this Place particularize for Reasons best known to my self, yet her principal Residence is at the Theatre, which has been Consecrated to her even from its first Establishment in this Nation.
To make my Narration as short as I can, on a lofty Throne fix’d on the Stage, and adorn’d with a false and counterfeit Magnificence, a painted Past[e]-Board Grandure, and mere Scenecal Glory, this gloomy Goddess is seated, and attends the Operations of the dusky Divan; first came in Sir John Edgar attended by C---y C---r, and his Theatrical Subjects of Drury-Lane, follow’d at a little distance by C---- B—ock, Jack L--, Gr—th, with the rest of the stroling Histrionics of Lincoln’s-Inn-Fields, whose Rear was brought up by L—s Th—ld Attorney; these two Troops were attended by all the Door-keepers, Scene-keepers, Candle-Snuffers, and depending Tradesmen on them both.

Next came in the little D---l de F-e, with pertness, Self-conceit, and over-weaning sufficiency in his Countenance, his Attendance were but few, for tho’ his Ignorance were of the first Magnitude, yet his inconstancy and his veering round to all Parties had reduc’d his Retainers to a very small Number, yet in some measure to supply this Defect, as in our Coronations we have two Persons to represent the Dukes of Aquitaine and Normandy, so he brought the several Booksellers and Printers to represent his own Works; as for Example, one for Robinson Crusoe, another for his Jure-divino, a third for his True-born Englishman, and so on to the rest of his Works. Next him came in E-- W-- attended by Carmen, Porters, Chairmen, and some others whom I purposely omit to name; then came in Booted and Spur’d from the County of Somerset John O--m--n Esq; but without any Attendance; much at the same time came in Dr. J--ph B--n and G--les J--bs Attorney, W---m P--tes, J--n G--y, Ch-- J--n-on, E-- S---tle, D—y B—sh, and a hundred other nameless Scribblers, known only to the Booksellers and Printers, what Men of the Long Robe were there, whether Spiritual or Temporal is not to my present purpose; it is doubted whether Y-- or S-- were there or not, the Affirmative is asserted by some, the Negative by others, the latter because they were both wounded in the Battle on the contrary Party.

The Assembly being thus met and confus’dly seated, it was some time before, even the Goddess herself could by her repeated Commands obtain Silence enough to be heard, but then in a long tedious incoherent Harangue fit for Sovereign Ignorance to utter, she let them know not only the War resolv’d upon, but told them that they were there met at this time to make Choice out of their Body of such general Officers as were proper and necessary for the present Expedition, and therefore order’d them every one to put in his Claim; her Words were no sooner out of her Mouth, but every one of the Company rose up, and began all together to declare their Merits, which was the Cause of such Confusion, that even Ignorance herself found out the necessity of Order, and therefore once more commanded them all to sit down and be silent, and one after another put in their Claim, but to avoid repeating the same Confusion, she directed Sir John Edgar to speak first, who immediately rising up and making a bow to the Throne began in this manner.

“My Sovereign Goddess and Indulgent Patroness, I stand up first to do you Honour, and next to lay before you those known Merits by which I lay claim to the chief Command in this present War: In the first place, I take my self to be the best qualify’d for this Command, by having been originally a Soldier, and that both in Horse and Foot, in the latter of which I was many Years a Commander, being therefore thus acquainted with Military Discipline, I am the fittest to direct upon this Occasion; I will not insist upon the Dignity of my Knighthood, tho’ that be an
Advantage that no other Candidate there present can pretend to, but shall urge those Merits only, which ought to render me most valuable to your Goddess-ship.

I think, I may without Vanity pretend to have been the greatest, most Successful, and popular Advocate for Ignorance that ever appear’d in this Nation, I do allow that many of my Brethren here present, may justly, perhaps pretend to an equal share in Ignorance with my self; but this I boldly may Assert, that, whereas they were only simply Ignorant, and promoted the common Cause, only by writing Ignorantly, I have been remarkably active in Assaulting, and Undermining the very Being of Arts and Knowledge, Enemies so terrible to your Sovereignty, that if they were permitted to go on uncheck’d, they would extirpate your Dominion quite out of the World; ’tis true I have not writ any Treatise or Papers in express Terms, and in plain Words against Arts and Sciences that had been a very vain, and fruitless Undertaking, and what would have arm’d the most favourable of my Readers against all I could urge upon such a Head : Cunning and Policy great Goddess, are of more Consequence, than down right Strength, and in these for your Interest I have shown my self a very great Master for letting the Arts of themselves alone, I have fallen upon their Teachers, and the Skilful in them, being Secure that by making them Ridiculous I effectually destroy Knowledge it self, and establish the Kingdom of Ignorance beyond all Opposition or Danger : Thus I have fix’d upon them the odious Names of Pedants and Critics, and endeavour’d to make it appear that to write like a fine Gentleman, and a polite Person : An Author must know nothing of Arts and Sciences, but be perfectly ignorant, to be perfectly Excellent, to make this out beyond all Controversy : There is nothing more certain, than that all Arts and Sciences consist of certain Rules and Maxims which essentially Constitutes them to be Arts and Sciences; but I have every where thro’ the whole Course of my Writings redicul’d, and Laugh’d at all manner of Rules, as stiff, formal and Pedantick, which is a less invidious, but more certain way; nay, I may say the only certain way of Effectually destroying all Arts and Sciences, all manner of Knowledge, and indeed every thing that can in the least disturb the Quiet of your unbounded Sway; if therefore not to my Quality, to my Experience in Arms, to my Popularity, give at least this command to the Services, I have done you, and to the Zeal I have hitherto, and always shall express for the Security and Enlargement of your Dominions."

At these words making a Bow, and sitting down in his Place, the Goddess smil’d horrible [sic], and after her way graciously upon him, and then order’d De F--e to speak, who rising up thus began, “I take it great Goddess, that Ignorance here is the chief Claim, and in that I think I have as great a Right as any Author this Nation ever beheld: Let me add, that my Ignorance has found the greatest Success, Hundreds of Volumes have I printed, both in Prose and Rhime, which have been greedily swallow’d, not only in England, Scotland and Ireland; but even as far as the East and Weft-Indies : The Gentleman who spoke last indeed has had good Luck in some Penny Papers, but when did he venture upon such Volumes as Jure Divino and Robinson Crusoe? Which my very Enemies own to be extraordinary Triumphs of Ignorance, there is still this difference between the Knight and my self that he seems to deserve a Suspicion of being guilty of some Knowledge, as having begun his Studies at the Charter-House, and finish’d them at Oxford, and to confirm the Suspicion, he is perpetually Quoting Latin at the Heads of his Papers, whereas I without either Free-School or House Learning, started from my Stocking-Shop, and in a Trice became a Voluminous, and taking Author; nor did I ever venture to Quote
Latin, but once, and then it prov’d to be false Latin, which I hope will be of some force in this Place; but since the Knight instances Military Know; (tho’ Knowledge of any kind seems here but a very odd pretence) I must do my self that Justice to let you know that I too have been a Military Man; soon after the Revolution, there was a Body of Zealous Dissenters, who got to be Incorporated into a Regiment, under the name of the Royal Regiment, who declared their Resolution to defend King William against all his Enemies, in this Regiment I had the Honour to be an Officer, ’tis confess’d, that we never were in Action, nay, that as soon as we heard the first Rumour of being design’d for such, we with much Fear and Solicitation got our selves to be Disbanded, however we were so often exercis’d during our Standing, that I think I may put in an equal Share to a Military Speculation, as well as the Noble Knight who spoke last, who, as far as ever I could learn kept himself as much out of the Enemies reach during all his Military time, as we did, and therefore I think I have an equal claim to Command with him. Upon this D--I sat down.

The Goddess observing C--y C---r sitting silent and biting his Nails, bid him stand up next and answer for himself, which he did.

“Great Goddess,” said he, “I am not going to contend for Command, I am not over fond of any thing that may bring blows or Danger; if there be any Post of Safety in this Expedition, such as a Member of the separate Ministry or the like, for that I am your Man; not but that if Ignorance and Impudence be a Claim to a more sublime Post, I pretend to as large a share in both as any Man breathing; nay I have a share in the Knight’s Merit of promoting the Kingdom of Ignorance, for during my Administration of the Stage, I challenge any Man to show that ever I was a Friend or an Encourager of a knowing Poet, or an Enemy to a Worthless and Ignorant Poetaster.”

It wou’d be too tedious to repeat all the Speeches that were made upon this Occasion, since they all tended to the same End, that is to recommend themselves to the Goddess of Ignorance by their own excess in the same; the Goddess having heard them all began in this manner to decide the Question. The only difficulty I find in deciding this Question lies betwixt Sir John and Daniel, both Men of very great Merit in my Esteem, and therefore to satisfie the Person who must miss of the Chief Command, I must tell you Daniel, that your Suspicion of the Knight’s being guilty of Knowledge from his Quoting of Latin Sentences at the beginning of his Papers, is perfectly groundless, since I have been very well inform’d, that they are always so little to the purpose that no Man believes he understands one Word of them, but yet they are of considerable Use to the Cause he carries on, for as the face of Religion is absolutely necessary for the Success of Hypocrisie, so is the face of Knowledge necessary for the promoting the Cause of Ignorance; and as for your upbraiding him with the Charter-house School and University Education, that still heightens his Esteem with me, since in spight of so many Years Conversation with the Learned dead, and the boasted Charms of Science, he could reserve his Breast and Head untainted with Arts, and to this Day remain firmly devoted to my self. To him therefore I decree the first place, to you D---I the Second, C---y C---r I make the General’s Adjutant …
“The King by this Immemorial Custom has always had a Right to Order and Govern his own Family, or Household, as he thinks fit, and by what Officers he shall Judge proper; but if any one shall procure a Patent, and have it so worded, as to exclude his Majesty, or any of his proper Officers from managing the Household, according to His Royal Will and Pleasure, that Patent is *ipso facto*, Void and Justly taken, to be procur’d at least in the Wording of it, *per Deceptionem*; and therefore the King must have an undoubted Right of recalling the said Patent, either by his Sign Manual, or by acting in the Management of His Household, as if no such Patent had been granted, and this without a formal Process in any of the Common Courts of Judicature, first, because, as has been said, the said Patent, was fraudulently obtain’d, and quite contrary to the Intention of the Doner: And next, because the Administration of his Majesty’s Household, is not to be suspended till the Decision of any Inferior Court, which may be delay’d by the unavoidable Formes in the Practice of that Court.

Your present Case Sir John, comes under the Head of Immemorial Custom, for, ever since Learning has been fix’d, and encourag’d in this Nation; the Authors who have Taught this Learning, have likewise been fix’d, and establish’d by the general Consent of all those who have either Taught, or Apply’d themselves to obtain it: Now, this Learning consists in the Knowledge of Arts and Sciences, which only can distinguish the Learn’d from the Vulgar; but all Arts and Sciences, as I have before observ’d, consisting of certain Rules, peculiar to each Art. Whoe’ver offend against these Rules must be Judg’d by them, and whoever would destroy them, plainly endeavours to destroy all manner of Learning, and, so to level the Learned and the Vulgar: Nay, to give the Vulgar the Advantage above the Learn’d, directly contrary to that Law of Immemorial Custom, which has Establish’d Schools and Universities in this Nation; for the Teaching of those very Arts and Sciences.

From all this Sir John, it is Evident that you are Try’d by the Law of England, both for your Offences against the Rules of Art, and your Traiterous endeavours to destroy, even Art it self, Establish’d, as I have shown by the Customary Law of this Nation; and it would be no hard matter to prove that this Customary Law is confirm’d, likewise by Acts of Parliament: If therefore you have no more to plead, but your empty Clamour about Law, that being thus remov’d, the Court will proceed to your Sentence.”

Artlove having done, the Knight, without taking Notice of any one of his Reasons, continued still to cry out, “Law, Law, I am an Englishman, and a Man of Honour;” but being with much difficulty Silenc’d.

The Court proceeded to Judgment, as follows: Daniel was condemn’d to write nothing for the future, but News Papers, or Letters to, and in Praise of, Mr. Mist.

The Knight’s Sentence, was immediately to have his Eyes pick’d out by the Pen of the vilest Ballad-maker in Town …