



*William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 81, no. 3 (July 2024): 567–96

***Sources and Interpretations***

The Second Installment of Arthur Lee’s “Suppressed” Antislavery Essay,  
the Public Sphere, and the Digital Archive

*By Eva Sheppard Wolf*

This article transcribes and places in context the previously unidentified second portion of Arthur Lee’s 1767 antislavery classic, “Address on the Abolition of Slavery and Retrieval of Specie in Virginia” (referred to by previous scholars as “Address on Slavery”). The second portion confirms that Lee’s address, published under the pseudonym “Philanthropos,” was part of a Virginia effort to end the slave trade, and it also demonstrates that Lee operated as part of a distinct, racist, Virginian antislavery tradition. The Quaker antislavery activist Anthony Benezet, who republished the first part of Lee’s essay, belonged to a more humanitarian antislavery tradition; he probably read but kept silent about the essay’s second portion, largely accounting for why historians have not known about it. Three additional newspaper essays inspired by Lee’s, along with the previously unstudied *Pennsylvania Chronicle* subscription book for 1767, illuminate print culture in the 1760s and suggest that, so far as it concerned slavery, a coherent printed public sphere did not then exist. Finally, this article argues that the use of digital search tools, which revealed these previously unknown sources, creates an epistemologically distinct view of the past because searching and browsing are fundamentally different ways of acquiring information.