

“Bestial manners, stupidity, and vices ...”

James Long

*One of the most influential descriptions of Negroes in eighteenth-century England is found in Edward Long's (1734-1813) 1774 book, The History of Jamaica. Writing of American Negroes in general, he repeats Hume's claims about the lack of "mechanic arts, or manufacture."*

We find them marked with the same bestial manners, stupidity, and vices, which debase their brethren on the continent, who seem to be distinguished from the rest of mankind, not in person only, but in possessing, in abstract, every species of inherent turpitude, that is to be found dispersed at large among the rest of of the human creation, with scarce a single virtue to extenuate this shade of character, differing in this particular from all other men; for, in other countries, the most abandoned villain we ever heard of has rarely, if ever, been known unportioned with some good quality at least in his composition. It is astonishing, that although they have been acquainted with Europeans, and their manufactures, for so many hundred years, they have, in all this series of time, manifested so little taste for arts, or a genius either inventive or imitative. Among so great a number of provinces on this extensive continent, and among so many millions of people, we have heard but of one or two insignificant tribes, who comprehend any thing of mechanic arts, or manufacture; and even these, for the most part, are said to perform their work in a very bungling and slovenly manner, perhaps not better than an oranoutang might, with little pains, be brought to do.