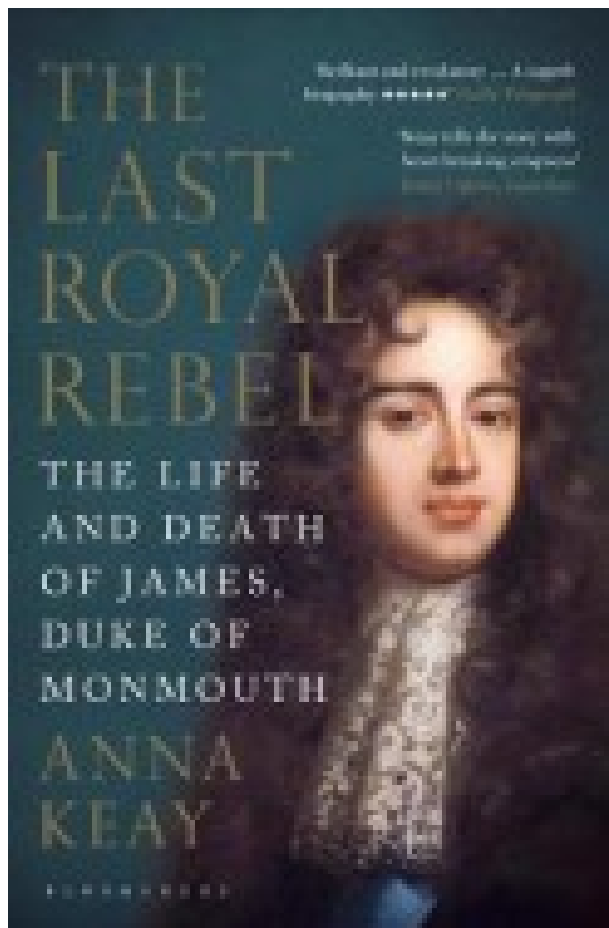


The Last Royal Rebel



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James, Duke of Monmouth, the adored illegitimate son of Charles II, was born in exile the year his grandfather was executed and the English monarchy abolished. Abducted from his mother on his father's orders, he emerged from a childhood in the backstreets of Rotterdam to command the ballrooms of Paris, the brothels of Covent Garden and the battlefields of Flanders. Pepys described him as 'the most skittish, leaping gallant that ever I saw, always in action, vaulting or leaping or clambering'. Such was his appeal that when the monarchy itself came under threat, the cry was for Monmouth to succeed Charles II as King. He inspired both delight and disgust, adulation and abhorrence and, in time, love and loyalty almost beyond fathoming. Louis XIV was his mentor, Nell Gwyn his protector, D'Artagnan his lieutenant, William of Orange his confidant, John Dryden his censor and John Locke his comrade. Anna Keay matches rigorous scholarship with a storyteller's gift to enrapturing effect.

She brings to life the warm, courageous and handsome Duke of Monmouth, a man who by his own admission 'lived a very dissolute and irregular life', but who was ultimately prepared to risk everything for honour and justice. His life, culminating in his fateful invasion, provides a sweeping history of the turbulent decades in which England as we know it was forged.

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