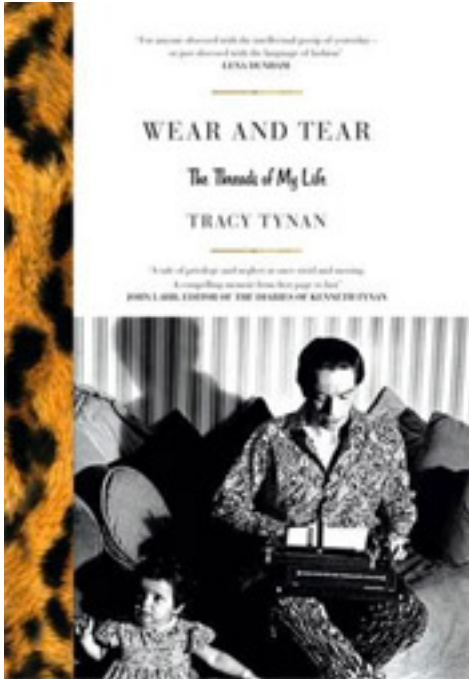


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WEAR AND TEAR: THE THREADS OF MY LIFE by Tracy Tynan (Duckworth Overlook, 18.99)

As a child, Hollywood costume designer Tracy Tynan was left with a succession of au pairs, while her jet-setting parents partied non-stop with literary and theatrical celebrities of 1950s and 1960s London and New York. Theatre critic Kenneth Tynan, author of the hit musical *Oh! Calcutta!*, and novelist wife Elaine Dundy were both flamboyant, extrovert and glamorous. At night, they fought savagely, flinging pasta and smashing crockery and each other's bones. 'Watching them was like watching a horror movie, scary but riveting,' Tracy Tynan writes.

Although she felt disturbed and longed for a normal family, Tynan missed the drama when she left home. Her parents equated the ordinary with being boring, and boredom was to be avoided at all costs. In the chaotic household, her nervous, chain-smoking father was forever struggling to meet his deadlines and placate her irritable, unpredictable mother. They drank heavily and brought home lovers. Unsurprisingly, they divorced when Tynan was only 13.

Structured around favourite pieces she has worn during different eras of her life – bikinis, apple-green shoes, Ossie Clark dresses – Tynan's memoir is most riveting when she recounts growing up with her appalling parents. They may have been monsters, but they certainly gave her plenty to write about. A highly entertaining page-turner.

Rebecca Wallersteiner