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### ***Rage: Managing an Explosive Emotion***

**Theodor Itten (2011)**

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On first sight, rage may seem a peculiar and curious theme for a clinical psychotherapy book. The term rage is commonly associated with people acting uncontrollably or destructively – a far cry from the serene spaces of our consulting rooms. Perhaps a topic for forensic clinicians then? Or possibly a topic we may all too easily shy away from or even seek to avoid altogether?

Itten takes his readers on rare investigative journey into the world of rage and its many facets and contexts. Two surveys, conceived to research rage phenomena, reveal that sudden rages are far more common than one might assume with some startling figures: In a street survey utilising quantitative social research tools, some 24% of participants identified themselves as “ragers”. This figure, alongside corresponding numbers of people who feel affected by the rage outbursts of others, should dispel any notions that rage concerns only a few.

In his quest to understand the phenomena of rage, Itten seeks answers from history, literature, mythology and the animal world. The book is structured into three parts. The first looks at the aetiology of rage including reasons and triggers given for rage backed up by supporting research data. This is followed by a study of rage manifestations, the range of rage expressions and behavioural phenomena associated with rage. In the final part, Itten explores avenues to address, manage and work with rage phenomena inside and outside the consulting room.

By drawing a kaleidoscope of rage manifestations, Itten’s book takes us on journey into psychic and biological but also societal anatomies of rage without ever squandering our attention. Throughout the volume, rage phenomena and dynamics are illustrated by a rich mix of examples and case vignettes. These include a host

well known people such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, Virginia Wolf, or Adolf Hitler's family but also contemporary football stars. Equally well developed is the range of relevant theory presented by the author. Theoretical excursions explore ADD, family dynamics and personality disorders as well as perspectives from neurobiology and body oriented psychotherapy approaches. The author frequently returns to research data to support his proposals and conclusions.

"Routes out of rage" run true to the author's unorthodox approach. They draw for example on Laing, Jung but also on mindfulness practice, the Hindu epic Ramayana and the Tao.

But is this publication relevant to clinical practice you may ask? I would argue it is. The author shows how rage may manifest in a multiple forms and finds expression both directly and indirectly. His book affords us an opportunity to review our own perceptions and possible blind spots about rage as well as providing us with language, symbols and metaphors, and essential references to explore rage phenomena in clinical contexts.

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<http://www.psychotherapy.org.uk/hres/Psychotherapist%20Spring%202012%20lo-res1.pdf>