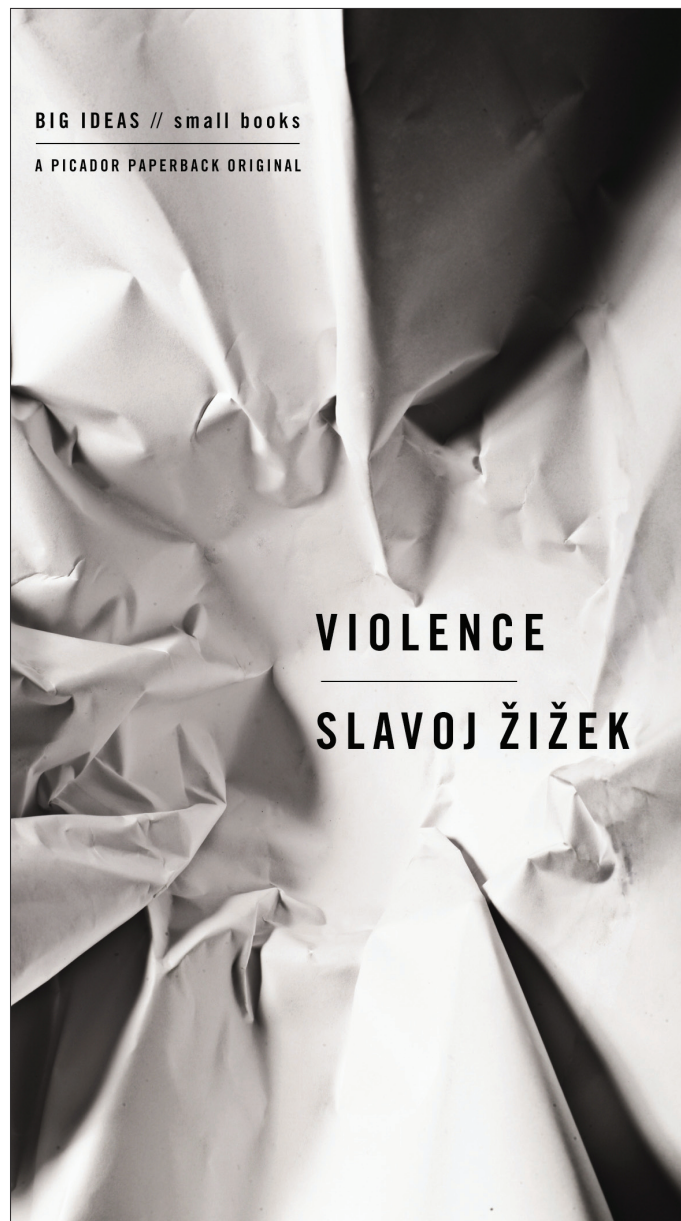

V I O L E N C E

Slavoj Žižek <PICADOR>

In the desolate landscape of philosophy, at the turn of the millennium, one name stands alone: Slavoj Žižek. The cult of personality surrounding the Slovenian philosopher, sociologist, and movie buff, is nearly a halo of intellectualist hype. He is the eccentric rock star of modern philosophy; his presentations are not just mundane academic speeches, but unrivaled performances—a whirlwind of wild gesticulations, myriad pop-culture references, and a subtle foaming at the mouth. His unmatched persona and ability to humanize complex theories about contemporary culture have

even landed him on the big and small screens in his extremely entertaining dissection of film, *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema*, and his 2005 documentary, *Žižek!* His ideas come from a mixed cauldron—Lacanian psychoanalysis, postmodernism, new leftist ideologies, post-Marxism—and now, in *Violence*, his latest book from Picador's "Big Ideas/Small Books" series, Žižek takes on the perceptions and the perversions of our notion of violence. He delineates three kinds: subjective (crime), objective (racism/ hate speech), and systemic (the obliteration of economic and political structures)—and investigates the way the media and our culture depict violence. When discussing



Time Magazine's unremarkable article about the four million killed in the Congo, he writes: "The Congo today has effectively re-emerged as a Conradian 'heart of darkness.' No one dares to confront it head on. The death of a West Bank Palestinian child, not to mention an Israeli or an American, is mediatically worth thousands of times more than the

death of a nameless Congolese." Žižek's polemical book flails delightfully through a colorful litany of scholars, historical and contemporary events, and everyday examples ranging from bar-room jokes to waiting in line at Starbucks, proving that Žižek's vivacity and rapid-fire delivery loses nothing in the transition from live presentation to the page. □