Eastern Europe has long been regarded as the West’s mysterious “other”. Yet its literary, artistic and cinematic traditions are as vibrant and memorable as any throughout the world. In this online class, we will survey some of the most canonical works by innovative writers and artists of former Yugoslavia, Poland, Greece, Turkey, Russia, Albania, Romania, the Czech Republic and Hungary. We will explore the themes of social identity, community, and historical memory and experience in this “other Europe,” as they developed in relation to Western culture and the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires; the rise of the Orthodox Church; the popularity of folkloric heroes like Dede Korkut and Marko Kraljević and Eastern monsters like the Golem and Dracula; the rise and collapse of totalitarian and Communist regimes; and the emergence of post-communist subjects and spaces in the new millennium.

Our texts will tentatively include short stories by Franz Kafka, Nikolai Gogol and Ivo Andrić; Serbian and Turkish epic poems and folk tales; classical music and ballet by Béla Bartók, Frédéric Chopin and P.I. Tchaikovsky; Holocaust fiction and poetry; art pieces by Marina Abramović; and Academy Award-winning films like Bosnia’s No Man’s Land [pictured above].

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