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Of the movies to be praised, the first is a fascinating Russian version of "Hamlet," taken from Boris Pasternak's admired translation and with the benefit of a rousing and portentous musical score by Dmitri Shostakovich. The script and direction of the picture are by Grigory Kozintsev, and the two leading players are Innokenti Smoktunovsky, as Hamlet, and Anastasia Vertinskaya, as Ophelia. It is bound to strike us as strange to hear what are among the greatest and most familiar lines in our language being uttered in a foreign paraphrase, and this strangeness is multiplied by an awkward use of English subtitles, which have been borrowed from the play but which, perhaps in order to match the length of a given sequence in Russian, are often savagely pruned. What we hear on the sound track isn't Shakespeare, and what we read in the subtitles isn't quite Shakespeare, either, but after a while it scarcely matters—the enormous energy and old-fashioned grandeur of style that Mr. Kozintsev has brought to the picture reduce its defects to trifles. "Hamlet" is, along with everything else, a superb if cluttered thriller, and in this production the emphasis is quite properly on the manifestation in solid, physical terms of whatever of the morbid and bizarre is conveyed in poetical terms in the play. One of Mr. Kozintsev's chief objects—surely it was Shakespeare's as well—is to make our flesh creep, and he has lavished much attention on the setting in which the bloody

deeds of the plot take place. We are in or about a turreted, brooding castle set on a cliff above a stormy, ceaselessly churning sea; outside, all is of a cemetery grimness and grayness, while inside the castle the flambeaux cast their flickering light along innumerable winding stone corridors, in which courtiers in fine stuffs and furs move with unease, feeling themselves on the brink

of some irremediable disaster. For the time is out of joint, and Hamlet's father's ghost is the genuine article; one doesn't doubt for a moment that the dread figure, hollow-voiced and hollow-eyed back of his fiercely visored helmet, must be avenged. Shakespeare and his contemporaries believed in ghosts, and so, for the length of this very stirring "Hamlet," did I.