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The Deluge (Potop). An Analysis of the Duel Scene

Potop (The Deluge) was directed by Jerzy Hoffmann and Jerzy Wójcik is the author of cinematography. For this analysis, we will focus on the scene in which Colonel Wołodyjowski fights Kmicic in a pouring rain. In Henryk Sienkiewicz's novel, this scene takes place at night and torches are used to light the area. According to Jerzy Hoffmann and Jerzy Wójcik, it was the most difficult scene to film in the entire movie and it took nearly two weeks to finish.

Several dozen people were thoroughly wet every day. There were duplicate costumes and even drying rooms were built.

A few firefighting units and an enormous amount of water was necessary to create a water suspension to cover this large area.

In 1975, *Potop* was nominated for an Academy Award. Its artistry is founded, among other things, on tying the action with subsequent seasons. The presence of the four elements – earth, water, air, and fire – is also very significant. Fire is especially prominent in the scene in which Kmicic burns the village of Wołmontowicze. The presence of water is exceptionally important in the duel scene. The elements have symbolic meanings and they bring the cinematographic image closer to the

viewers experience. The way in which Jerzy Wójcik presented the forces of nature makes *Potop* as outstanding as those international masterpieces in which the imagery of the four elements plays a major role. Akira Kurosawa's films are examples of such works.

Wołodyjowski carries a light sabre – the same one that was used by Tadeusz Łomnicki when he played Colonel Wołodyjowski in the *Pan Wołodyjowski (Colonel Wolodyjowski)* movie. Kmicic is armed with a heavy karabela that has been recreated in accordance with historical designs.

The two actors, Tadeusz Łomnicki and Daniel Olbrychski, had to learn how to fight while keeping their wrists immobile. They had fencing experts to guide them in their training. The slightest change in the position of their wrists would give several dozen centimetres of difference in the position of the sabres point. Every mistake could potentially lead to very serious danger. Tadeusz Łomnicki mentioned that at one point during the duel he barely managed to avoid being hit by Olbrychski's karabela.

The shoes that the actors are wearing in this scene had special studs added – just like the ones used in football boots – to add some grip and make it possible for the men to maintain balance on the slippery surface. Why was the scene filmed this way? Why was it raining? Jerzy Wójcik answers these questions in his book, *Labirynt światła*. He says that a great conflict takes place there – one that shows what people can do to one another. The steadiness and imminence of nature encompasses it all.

It keeps raining. The protagonists do not pay attention to this, aside from a single sentence said by Kmicic. In the film, the rain is the equivalent of the dramatic situation shown in the duel scene.

A duel - Jerzy Wójcik says - is not a sequence of moves used in fencing. It is a conflict between two people. Someone is terrified or wants to win. They suffer from an internal conflict, in which their passions are involved.

In this scene, the rain helps to uncover a person's inner world for the purpose of a cinematic image. It is, in fact, a character in the story.