



Rocky Balboa: The Innocent and the Invincible Hero of Low Income Class

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Abstract

This study is aiming to scrutinize that how American low income class is represented in Rocky Balboa film series in regards of Rocky Balboa character. It will try to understand the mission which is given to Rocky along the film series by examining the concepts such as the values which Rocky represents, class standing, moving up in social ladder, etc. in the scripts of Rocky movies. The life line of Balboa which we have begun to witness while he was living in a poor neighborhood leads us to the different faces of his life along the six films of series: firstly, the world championship that he got by defeating Apollo Creed, then keeping his belt for a long time and defeating Ivan Drago, then losing all his wealth and has to return to the neighborhood where he was living previously and the last fight that he did during his retirement. The hypothesis of the study is that the films of Balboa series are reflecting the life of American low income class 'realistic' with Rocky Balboa's character, and the hypothesis is going to want to verify it along the study.

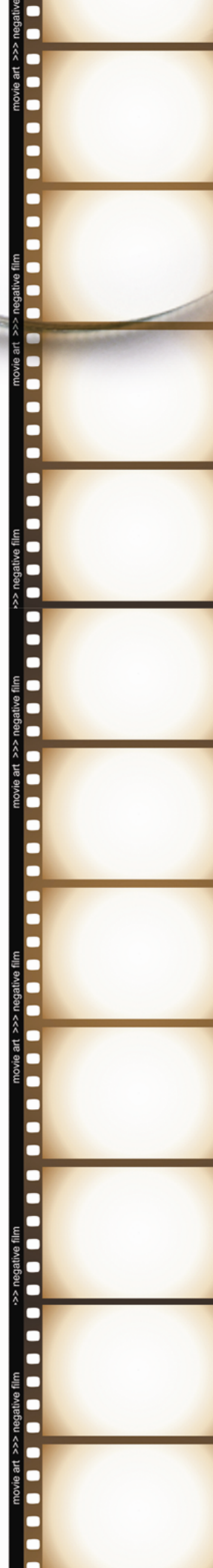
Keywords: Rocky Balboa; American Cinema; American Low Income Class; Sociology; Film Studies



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‘get up.. get up, you son of a b...h !!’

Introduction

Capitalist production understanding was developed and flourished in Europe from medieval Europe to the end of the 18th century. The balance point of capitalism shifted in 19th and 20th centuries to America thanks to its vast geography, wilderness resources and high manpower. It is possible and correct to count Philadelphia as well as cities such as New York, Chicago and Cleveland which grew on the basis of industrial economy, especially in the north of America.

Capitalist production relations divide society roughly into two classes: those who have means of production and those who do not have. The class that controls the means of production also begins to control capital and gains the name of ‘capital class’. This simple contrast has been pronounced in the social sciences as 'capital class' and 'working class' in many times.

In such a social dichotomy, the Rocky Balboa character is designed to represent the working class.

The Rocky Balboa movie series, which we are all familiar with in some way, talks about the whole life of a boxer from the back streets of Philadelphia gradually. It is the story of a semi-professional boxer who does the small amount collections for the local mafia in the poor neighborhood and who reaches the world championship and then returns to the poor neighborhood.. Rocky serie

whose first film was shot in 1976 and last film in 2006, has been carrying out an important mission by examining the general characteristics of American working class in the background of films.

Theoretical Concepts And Method

Derek Nystrom argues that Rocky has a part in the popular cinema with 'white', 'worker' and 'male' identities. According to him, the first Rocky film displays the relationship of 'white masculinity' with other identities that became evident in the public domain of the 1970s. The nickname 'Italian Stallion' has been deemed appropriate for Balboa by referring to his Italian origin, and this nickname also reminds us that he is a white male (Nystrom, 2015:82). The definition of Balboa is only about being a 'white man': the advantages of being 'man' and 'white' in American society are kept away from him. Being a person from lower class is his main frustration (Nystrom, 2015:83). The fact that a white and male worker character is so appreciated and favored by American society proves that 1970s American working class was yearning a character who has these characteristics. This character is a subject that reflects them on the screen and also, they can find a lot of pieces from themselves on him. Ilias Ben Mna is thinking that Rocky films of the 1980s brought back the "white and male" concerns of the 1970s: "Drawing on the Hollywood mythology of movies like Rocky and Rambo, the stylized white, male "underdog" regained currency in 1980s political discourse" (Ben Mna, 2021:90). So, it can be claimed that Rocky Balboa is a movie character whom the white American male has no difficulty identifying with himself.

Slightly different from Nystrom's interpretation, Kellner considers Rocky as the embodiment of the fear that white workers feel towards black workers: “And the racism of films like Rocky can be read as articulations of white working-class fears of blacks and as testimonies to increased cultural and political power of blacks in U.S. society, while the relative absence of dramatic Hollywood narrative films about blacks in the Reagan era can be interpreted as the resistance of conservatives to black demands for racial equality and increased power.” (Kellner, 2003:104).

Victoria Elmwood argues that the first Rocky movie aims to compensate for the general disappointments of American society since World War II, and also it is a response to the rise of blacks and women in society: “The film’s characters and its outcome provide a neo- conservative resolution to the challenging social, economic, political, and military shifts that had taken place since the end of World War II. A culture of burgeoning consumerism, the unsuccessful campaign in Vietnam, and the loss of faith in the democratic experiment implicit in Watergate all elicit a response within the film’s world. However, the social advances made by African Americans and women in the quarter decade after the war receive the most intense and shrewdly plotted resolution in the ideological implications of the film’s narrative.” (Elmwood, 2005: 49) According to her, “..the film reaffirms traditional gender boundaries and values..” (Elmwood, 2005:49) With this reaffirmation, the film also purposes to ensure the conservative values in the field of gender.

The films of the Rocky series are the films that have gained the attention of the audience every time they are released. Kellner argues that Rocky, like other elements of American culture that has resonated around the world, is part of American popular culture: “Such phenomena of U.S. media culture as the Rambo and Rocky films, Madonna and Michael Jackson, MTV and rap, CNN and U.S. TV news footage, American advertising and commodities, and the forms of American television, music, film, and other aspects of media culture are popular throughout the world, ...” (Kellner, 2003:5). According to Kellner, this interest to Rocky movies at the box office is an example of the white worker's desire to 'skip class' and 'live richly': “The popularity of the Rocky movies (number 2 in box- office gross in 1977, number 3 in 1979, and all among the top fifty money-makers of all time) suggests that they appeal to widespread desires for class transcendence. Yet the films also indicate that such desires tend to get channeled toward the ideal of the accumulation of wealth, which merely reinforces the system of class oppression.” (Ryan-Kellner, 1988, Chapter 4, publish.iupress.indiana.edu)

Elmwood claims that, as close to Nystrom's thought, two of the concepts which are built throughout the Rocky series are ‘masculine status’ and ‘national citizenship’ (Price, cited from Elmwood, 2014:92). Although the Rocky series' goals and defends the social stance of lower class, we have to admit that it has a conservative position in terms of masculinity and nationalism; there are many events and speeches that confirms this argument throughout the serie. Elmwood

professes “..remasculization of white men (and, by extension, the nation)..” (Price, cited from Elmwood, 2014:92) idea. In this context, the Rocky series is seen as a group of films that return the patriarchal self-esteem to the white man. We find also nationalist elements as natural companion of patriarchy and conservatism in whole series.

Aristotle has identified four basic features for characters in an artwork. These are the good morality, suitability, resemblance and consistency of the character (Aristoteles, 2012: 42-43).

Balboa has all these four features that a character who can be idealized in a work of art can have.

He has a perfect moral, is always displaying the morally correct. He has all qualities which are suitable for a hero character. He resembles to low class that is consisted of the majority of society because he is already one of them. He is consistent because he does not deviate even single millimeter from his principles which he adheres from the first film of the series to the last film.

In our opinion, the relationship between the audience in the movie, which is called "star" or "leading role", has two kinds. One of them depends on ‘admiration’ and ‘externalization’; star actor is handsome, rich, libertine, leads a luxurious life etc. People, especially the lower class, admire him and want to be in his place. The relationship between the audience and the star is distant because there is a huge difference in terms of facilities and luxury of life. There is also ‘admiration’ in the other type of relationship, but this time ‘internalization’ accompanies it. Rocky

Balboa has this kind of relationship with the audience. The lead actor is poor, in most cases helpless, he has always been pushed by life and people. Again, especially the lower class admires and identifies with him because the lead role portrays their lives in the movie.

As a cinema language, the Rocky series shows both realistic and melodramatic features. Linda Nochlin recognizes the realism line such as: “Realism, as an historical movement in the figurative arts and in literature .. it was the dominant movement from about 1840 until 1870-80. Its aim was to give a truthful, objective and impartial representation of the real world, based on meticulous observation of contemporary life (Nochlin, 1971:13). The Rocky series aims to form identicalness with real life as much as possible. This concern feels more obvious especially in the first and fifth films of the series. While watching low class neighborhood in Rocky series, we see that there is no difference from a real low class neighborhood. On the other hand, Mederson claims that the first Rocky movie finishes as ‘melodrama’ immensely, during the fight and the final phase of the film after the fight, while he is thinking that the film until the fight is pretty real (Mederson, 2014:8).

Hallam-Marshment suggests that melodrama heroes have hostiles and their “.. adversaries are evil men (sometimes women), a different social group, a hostile ideology, an accident or chance event, or a malign evil force” (Hallam-Marshment, 2000:6). Mederson claims at this point that “.. Balboa’s villain seems to be within himself .. individuals often find themselves battling not a

discrete and obvious ‘other’ foe but instead struggling with their own issues of identity. For Balboa, this struggle is his attempt to become the person he believes that he could have been, or should have been” (Mederson, 2014:9).

It is possible to find a lot of parallel points between Rocky Balboa’s life and Sylvester Stallone’s life, who plays Balboa and writes the script of the movie. There are important affiliations on Balboa character from Stallone’s life, who did not play a proper role in his acting career and had economically difficult times until first Rocky film. Stallone and Balboa are 30 years old at 1976. Neither of them had achieved a remarkable success. Maybe they would have dreamt a point but they could not reach it. Maybe they thought they hadn't got the respect they deserve until that age. Stallone repeats the same ‘film and real life parallelism’ in fifth film of Rocky serie. He made his real son, Sage Stallone, play as Rocky Balboa’s son. In script, Rocky becomes poor when he is rich. As his son was born and raised in very good economic conditions, we can see that Sage Stallone is an appropriate choice for the role of 'child who is passing from rich class to poor class'. This similarity between ‘real life’ and ‘film life’ is empowering the realist approach of series.

Our work will draw inspiration from two methods to study the data that Rocky films offer: one of them is ‘class analysis’ and our other methodological assistant will be ‘semiotic analysis’. Tulin Ongen asserts that the determining role of places and roles in production relations in explaining

classes and class positions is the first thing we need to consider while dealing with class-exploitation relation (Ongen, 2006:26). Rocky Balboa is a worker. Although he cannot keep a maintain consistency in a formal job, he earns his life with his labor. In this context, every action or attitude that he realizes, requires class analysis which does not forget that he is a laborer.

Fiske argues that semiotics studies how signs work as well as signs themselves (Fiske, 2013:62).

Guiraud, on the other hand, considers the 'representation' as a 'sign' and claims that the way of transferring an element that is not explicitly presented with representation, is allusion (Kabadayı, cited from Guiraud, 2013:71). Rocky and his rivals, Creed, Lang, Drago and Gunn, all of them are embodied forms of different phenomena along whole film series. In this aspect, they are the subject of a semiotic analysis.

Films

When the first movie introduces us to Rocky's life, the first thing we can say about his life is that his life is 'limited' and 'based on routines', like almost every laborer. Rocky earns his life with an informal and illegal job, where he hangs are the neighborhood bars, whom his friend is Paulie and he knows Paulie's sister Adrian from the neighborhood. In this repetitive life, it is really hard to produce a life purpose for himself and to add a meaning to its life. Like many lower class people, he lives a pessimistic, depressed and introverted life.

While Apollo Creed is leafing through the catalogue of boxers, ‘Italian Stallion’, which is the nickname of Balboa intrigues Apollo’s interest and he would like to give a chance to Rocky. The concept of ‘the chance which comes to person incidentally and irrationally’, which is seen in melodramas oftenly, finds a place for itself in this movie, too. Rocky is a person whom is insulted and belittled by the majority of the people in the neighborhood where he lives in. People do not care him and he himself is aware of the situation. In this respect, to be given chance by Apollo Creed who is world heavyweight champion to a boxer who lived his life until his 30 as ‘nobody’ is the first step on the way of his converting to ‘someone’. The interesting side of the process is that he obtains an opportunity such as by ‘a stroke of luck’, as a man who earned his life by his labor for his lifetime.

Price is mentioning “.. American myths about the successes of poor immigrants and other poor folks who come from nothing to achieve something meaningful in their lives” (Price, 2014:87) in his article. This kind of myths are being used much especially in American melodramas and empowering the thought that if you work hard and enough, you would have always a chance to skip from lower class to upper ones. Capitalism always needs individuals who are ambitious and aiming to skip class because only this sort of people can realize the profit which is needed. Robin Wood asserts that Rocky has an invisible mission in the favor of capitalist system: “.. Rocky was

designed to reinstate: racism, sexism, “democratic” capitalism: the capitalist myths of freedom of choice and equality of opportunity, the individual hero whose achievements somehow “make everything all right”, even for the millions who never make it to individual heroism (but every man can be hero – even, such is the grudging generosity of contemporary liberalism, every woman)” (Wood, 2003:147).

Rocky’s interpretation for skipping the class is rather different. We can define the process of Rocky that begins in first movie, is completed in the first movie to a great extent and continues in the rest of the serie, can be named as ‘self-actualization’. “Self-actualization, according to Maslow, represents growth of an individual toward fulfillment of the highest needs—those for meaning in life, in particular” (www.psychologytoday.com). The process of Rocky's 'self-actualization' can also be named as 'self-structuration'. Rocky found the woman of his life, developed a warm relationship with his future wife and brother-in-law, and his master Mickey, always treated people well and showed his courageous attitude towards the evil people and the system. Rocky has built himself through six films. He ended his boxing career happily and peacefully, and his life also will probably end peacefully. It is his real championship in life that he transforms himself from a 'nobody' to a 'completed person'. This ‘self-conversion’ process which individual is constructing itself level by level and being completely matured at the last level is an action which is repeated in a lot of films in American cinema and is liked much by American cinema audiences.

Another thing which can be said about Rocky Balboa is that he has a mind which perceives ‘slowly’, a mouth which is talking for ‘only talking’ and a heart which is childlike. Despite being incredibly strong, Rocky, who never uses this force to torture, is portrayed to us as an innocent and ingenuous personality. Another feature of Balboa is his talking style that most low-income class people have: speaking by shouting and speaking with a limited vocabulary. Personality structure and speaking style make lower class people who are watching the movie easier to internalize him.

Salyer is underlining his Italian root and working class features: “He is Italian-American and fits into the stereotypical mold in the way he dresses, speaks, and carries himself throughout the first film .. He represents the classic working-class man during the 1970s.” (Salyer, 2009:48). Salyer is also adding that his vacuous life style which is recognized by Marx as ‘lumpen proletariat’: “He is without a calling or purpose aimlessly wandering with few goals and no self-confidence or self-respect” (Salyer, 2009:124). Here, Salyer indicates two ideational points that Balboa shares with many laborers: he thinks ‘he has no value’ and ‘he has no purpose’ in life. In fact, this is the way of thinking that capitalism teaches the lower class. Feeling worthless, aimless, penniless keeps the low income class in a more manageable point and reinforces the feeling of helplessness against the system.

Balboa's 'loser' feature in local boxing matches is in parallel with his private life. He is a loner in his private life; besides, a soft and animal lover man who is feeding turtle, a faithful Christian who has a cross on the bedside, a noble soul who carries a homeless person into the bar in the cold weather and prevents him from freezing. Balboa is the representer of a spotless moral stance throughout the entire film series. This feature shows itself when he takes away a girl whom he knows from the people who hangs out on the street; he recommends also to her not to smoke. He warns that men would not take her seriously; they would perceive her as scurrile, a woman who does not deserve respect and a woman whom is thought only for sexuality: “.. they don't remember you. They remember the rep, you understand? .. you ain't got a boyfriend. You know why? Why don't you? Because you hang out with these coconuts on the corner”. Balboa has a strong ethical dimension and bound up with ethic rules. He can make a choice between 'right' or 'wrong' life but he is making these choices with his heart, not with his brain. He is a human being who is thinking with his heart.

His merciful personality can be seen at his relation with Mickey. Mickey Goldmill, who did not help him at first and got Rocky's locker in his own gym, comes to Rocky's home and proposes to be his manager when a fight was set with Apollo. Rocky fires away to Mickey with all chagrin which years have brought: "I needed your help about ten years ago, right? You never helped me. You did not care.. took you long enough to get here. Took you ten years to come to my house?"

Huh, what's the matter? You don't like my house? Does my house stink? That's right.. it stinks. I didn't have no favors from you.. Come on in! It's a nice house!! Real nice. Come on in and move. It stinks. This whole place stinks..". Nevertheless, his childish side can't refuse him, he scruples. He goes and gives a hug him, shakes Mickey's hand.

In regards of semiotics field, Apollo Creed represents a rich and prosperous America while Balboa is representing poor America. As we will see in 3rd film of serie, Apollo came from a poor past like a lot of black people. In spite of his past, he could climb the stairs in the manner which capitalism expects and obtained what capitalism has prepared for him. Now, it is Balboa's turn; like Creed and other a lot of boxers, it is expected from him that he would pass from low income class to high income class by the chance that his brutal force provides. He would marry a beautiful woman like Creed, he would live in a wonderful home like Creed and he would drive a fabulous car like Creed. Although Balboa's later alteration is happened on this way in economic dimension, he never converts someone like Creed in regard of the philosophical values which he is involved with. He is aware of that money only increases his life standards and provides to buy more things but he will never let the money to ruin his principled laborer stance which he will continue in his whole life.

It can be seen easily that Apollo Creed is designed with all features inside and outside of the ring, as an imitation of Muhammad Ali who has been the most popular boxer of all times ever. Creed is handsome, living in luxury, rich, popular and reputable outside of the ring, like Muhammad Ali. The quickness of his feet, the quickness of punches, the boxing style which he is dancing always are his features inside the ring, like Muhammad Ali. As a boxer who is always winning-oriented how capitalist culture is needed and teaches to Americans, he is like Muhammad Ali.

Although Rocky fought and defeated black boxers in first three films of serie, getting into a white-black dichotomy at this point which is inspired from Creed is a black boxer and Balboa is a white boxer would be 'cut corner'. At least at the first stage, the important thing is not the race but the class of the boxers. Balboa is poor and Creed is rich.. that is the basic dichotomy. In this context, Balboa is representing working class, namely the people who do not have an instrument to survive else their labor but Ryan-Kellner insists that Balboa-Creed encounter is a reflection of the inner-class conflict and dichotomy between white and black workers by referring first Rocky film: “..Made during the second major recession of the decade, it transcodes white male working-class fears and desires, offering a vision of hope at a distressing time .. One scene in which Rocky is obliged to give up his locker to a black contender suggests the literal, metonymic origin of that racism, at least as it appeared in the seventies, in fears of losing scarce jobs to blacks.” (Ryan-Kellner, 1988, Chapter 4, publish.iupress.indiana.edu) What Ryan-Kellner emphasizes is that an

in-class conflict based on economic fears which reveal itself with the concept of 'race'. Like all humiliations based on religion, nation, sectarian and gender, racial humiliations and social disturbances also are essentially based on economy; both in-class conflicts and the conflicts between classes are driven by economic reasons.

The fight in the first movie is in 1976, the 200th anniversary of the founding of America. Creed wears caricatured George Washington's clothing first and after Uncle Sam's clothing before the bout (Nystrom, 2015:83). We can perceive this cartoonish image as making fun of a black boxer with a regime which has used his race as slave for very long time and seen his own race as a second-class human community since the foundation of state. On the other hand, these outfits can be seen as elements that favor the nationalist side of American society. Whether it is irony or it contains a nationalist message, this choice of Creed proves that the 'right thought' finds place for itself in the film series.

Although Balboa is losing the fight in the first film, actually he is the winner cause he is the one who wins not in the ring but out of the ring. The most important result of the fight for him is to form and to discover himself: “.. Balboa has overcome his biggest foe: his low self-esteem. He identifies himself as a bum throughout the film. In the end, he has proven to himself he is not a bum” (Mederson, 2014:10). “No longer will he be a nobody thug from a nowhere neighborhood,

but he would be thrust into the spotlight with an elite fighter” (Salyer, 2009:125). Balboa’s labor and endeavor have a result at the end of the film.

Rocky marries Adrian in second film. He looked for Adrian at the end of the fight with Apollo like a child who is demanding his mom. Only this marriage makes possible to rid of that man, who does not belong anyone and anywhere, being a ship that is drifting on the sea and looking for to dock a port. The name of this port is Adrian Pennino, or with her new name, Adrian Balboa. Rocky recognizes this pair which both of them are Italian-rooted American as ‘I think we make a sharp couple of coconuts’ and ‘I am a dumb and you are a shy’. His trainer Mickey Goldmill wanted him to leave Adrian at first because according to him, ‘women weaken legs’. But in whole film serie, family concept is pretty important for Rocky. I am thinking that underlining constantly the concepts of spouse and family is appropriate to the latent conservative stance of serie and this is also compatible with the latent conservative structure of American society. Adrian is always on the side of Rocky in all kind of hard situations and she is invisible power which makes him stand.

Rocky has desires to consume when he got a considerable amount of money from the fight with Creed. Firstly, he buys a car although her right eye is problematic, then he wants to buy a fur coat to Adrian, he prefers the expensive one while he is buying watch, lastly he buys a home with bank

credit. While he is doing all these acts, Adrian is always temperate; she brakes him and she is also rather remote against capitalist practices. Actually, Rocky's goal is not to lose himself in a meaningless consumption but to make beautiful gestures to her spouse whom he has married very new and to provide her a good life standard.

Rocky's lack of self-confidence, which is occurred to be someone who belongs to low income class and having a limited intelligence which he himself also is aware of, leaped to the eye instantly. That inferiority complex of Rocky who defines himself in several conversations as 'dumb', 'bum' is clarified more in a conversation between Rocky and Adrian in second film. Adrian wants their kid to be like Rocky if the baby would be a boy but Rocky is objecting jokingly: "don't you think one dumbbell in the family is enough, huh?" He does not want his child resemble to him but resembles to Adrian: "this kid ain't gonna get no tattoos. He ain't gonna be hanging on no corners or dress like no wise guy like me .. he's gonna be good somebody like you". This 'learned helplessness' situation makes Rocky think that he is not an exemplary person in society, even for his own child. He thinks that Adrian who is smart, sober, polite should be taken as an example. However, Adrian also appreciates Rocky with his loving, thoughtful, humane and helpful aspects.

Rocky's inferiority complex comes to light more when the capitalist system makes him play in TV advertisements. In an 'after shave' advertisement, he can't read the words because his reading is not fine. As a result of this, the director shows contempt to him: "you cost us thousands of dollars because you can't read". Rocky reads the book to Adrian at home after this humiliation he got; most probably he tries to overcome humiliation and to prove that his reading is adequate. As it is seen, the difficulties of low-income class are more in the social relations than economic issues. Their low education level, their inabilities on reading and writing are taunted; these features of them are used as a scorning reason.

Rocky is a person who left the school on 9th grade. After the fight, he applied a lot of jobs and in his all applications, he demands deskjobs but the people who evaluates his applications tell him that his education level and occupational qualification is not proper for deskjobs. The only job he can find is carrying the crates of red meat in the slaughterhouse but he is fired from this job also in a short time.

Ryan-Kellner argues that *Rocky 2*, like *Rocky*, is a film which aims the victimization feeling of the white American worker: "Rocky II (1979) is a particularly good indicator of the pressures and growing resentments that would turn white working-class voters toward the Republicans in 1980 .. A black supervisor tells him that he must be laid off because of seniority rules (it was, of course, at this point in time that capitalist retrenchment for the sake of preserving profits was pressuring

white workers to turn against affirmative action programs that gave blacks advantages over whites, despite seniority) .. whites at the time were blaming on blacks, instead of on wage-lowering, price-raising capitalists.” (Ryan-Kellner, 1988, Chapter 4, publish.iupress.indiana.edu) It can be seen easily that the hatred of white workers towards black workers instead of the system stems from lack of class consciousness. The same lack of class consciousness is the answer to the question of why the workers turn to the populist discourses of the right parties.

Rocky’s conservative and patriarchal core reveals again in this hard situation they face. He does not take kindly to Adrian’s proposition on the return to her former job in pet shop even in the case of he is fired and is distressed financially. When Adrian says that “.. if we need, I could get a job”, he replies “you don’t have to do that”. Adrian continues to persist: “Oh, sure. I can get my job back, you know, part time, at the shop” but Rocky meets this sentence with a sentence which underlines that he is the responsible person for the family's livelihood: “But I’m the one who is supposed to support”. Thinking that the man should take care of the family is an example which exhibits Rocky's conservative aspect. Nevertheless, he respects Adrian's desire to participate in economic life and says "you really wanna do it?" When Adrian says "we need the money", Rocky replies "maybe you're right, you know". Rocky's personality is mature enough to respect his wife's wishes, although the conservatism is a part of his personality.

Nevertheless, the reason that pushes Rocky to confront Apollo again is that his subconscious persuades him that he can be nothing else to be a boxer, more than economic reasons. Boxing sport which he does not take serious much and does semi-professionally for making a bit money awakes 'the fighter' inside him, that happened during the fight with Apollo in first film. That 'challenger soul' is revealed in the second film as a result of that when all doors which he tries to open in the life are closed to his face. Although the health of his right eye is obstacle to fight, even so, he thinks that he was born to be a fighter. He notices very good that the boxing ring is only place that he can prove himself and where he belongs. That thought, may be, the main reason he would like to return boxing; boxing is providing an opportunity to be 'something'. Rocky says about his phase after Apollo fight as: 'I think I'm becoming a nobody again, too'.

The only impediment which restrains him is his spouse: Adrian. Balboa's concentration is extremely bad during the preparation stage of the fight because of Adrian's negative attitude. Paulie is aware of the situation and he scolds Adrian. Adrian is scarring that Rocky goes blind, she is rather fair about her afraid and she screams her afraid to Paulie's face: "If he goes blind, you walk away. I can't. I love him, you don't!"

The adverse probabilities which Rocky's fight can bring affects pregnant Adrian poorly and she gives birth earlier than she should and she goes into a coma due to haemorrhage. Rocky's acts during the Adrian's coma are a ceremony which proves that he pays homage to religion and family

concepts again. Paulie proposes to Balboa: “let’s go see the kid” but Balboa refuses immediately: “no, we gotta see him together”, by referring Adrian and her awakening. During her coma, Rocky prays in the church of the hospital, reads book to Adrian, reads a text which he himself writes to Adrian. The loyalty that he exhibits to family and religion concepts are awarded by script and Adrian recovers from coma. There is another product of the loyalty which Rocky shows to her during Adrian’s coma: Adrian approves the fight with Apollo; moreover, she wants from Rocky to win.

Rocky never cares winning against Apollo and his rivals in later films, Clubber Lang, Ivan Drago, Tommy Gunn and Mason Dixon. Winning gains importance for him only if when the people whom he represents want. In a sport which two persons hit to each other murderously, the disregard of winning by one of the sides is sourced from a mentality difference. All competitors of Rocky, even Ivan Drago who raised and grew in state socialism environment and far away capitalist practices, are in love with the fruit of ‘winning’ concept which is sweet at outside but poisonous inside. The ‘winning’ feeling, which is the most basic and the most motivating notion of capitalist system, is educating by shaping all psychological and mental dynamics of a professional boxer who raised in that capitalist system.

At both of the first and second films, Rocky's low-class stance continues while he is training. He is training in dilapidated places such as abandoned factories, neglected port etc. He runs in train lines and street market of his own neighborhood. Running among the poor people who are in street market of the neighborhood is goaling to get their approval. He can go to the ring and represent the working class only after obtaining their approval. He is running with kids from his neighborhood; kids are helping to empower the 'innocence' stance of Rocky. He is also representing his hometown, Philadelphia city, cause the fight will be held in Philadelphia.

The first round of their second fight, Creed makes Rocky fall down. He does the same thing in second round. Bourgeois class is beating working class mercilessly but working class gets up again. Working class increases its influence in every round. It falls down with bourgeois class at the final round together but it can achieve to get up before bourgeois class. Thus, the second film of Rocky series declares victorious the labor class against the bourgeois class and the revenge of the defeat in first film is taken.

Third film of the series carries Balboa to rich class and ornaments him with capitalist opportunities. The reason of this conversion is that Rocky defended his title to defeat a lot of rivals after second Apollo fight. Balboa lives the same process which a lot of sportsmen who are successful in their own sport branch live: he seems on the cover of magazines, he plays in the advertisements, he

begins to live in a very beautiful home, he buys fur coat to Adrian, he seems in Muppet Show, he deals signatures, he becomes a guest to White House and meets with several Presidents.. and of course money.. plenty of money. System presents a lot money to him to build his own social status and and to have all tangible means.

In spite of all these opportunities, Rocky does not sell him out to system. He does not have the same life philosophy with rich people who are at the parties that Rocky is invited; they and Rocky are sharing only the same economic opportunities. Rocky doesn't divorce from his wife, he doesn't abandon his friends; he is continuing to live in his tiny, peaceful and sincere environment. Script opposes Clubber Lang, who represents the exact opposite of a value which Rocky has, to Balboa. That value is loneliness. We can follow this case in the words of Lang: "I live alone and I train alone. I'll win the title alone". It is important that to underline his loneliness while there is Rocky's family that likes and supports Rocky. Despite the love circle which is around Rocky, Lang is completely alone and that situation pushes him an intensified aggression. Lang is deprived of the love that a family can give to the member of the family.

Another points which Balboa and Lang are separating are 'winning' concept which capitalist system has taught to American society and 'proving himself' concept which is coming afterwards winning. 'Winner' and 'loser' notions have been arisen in American society on the occasion of

capitalist progress needs always ‘winning’ people. Actually, the notions which lie behind the capitalist system are the notions such as individuality, challenge, survive, inequality and rivalry. The reason that these notions, which are revealed from human nature and existing in every society of world more or less, gain importance much more in American society is capitalist production relations which have been produced more ruinous and more dominant to social life. That passion which is arisen exceedingly in an individual sport like boxing, turns the boxers to a winning-oriented machine. Balboa has no passion such as, because he is not a capitalist. He never shows effort to earn more money but money has come and found him. He never shows up in the ring to win; he goes into the ring only to realize a good fight. His modesty on the issues of both earning the money and winning the fight is rather extraordinary for a world champion boxer, especially for an American boxer. But the desire of proving himself for Clubber Lang is very intensified how the system teaches him: “I’ll fight him anywhere, anytime, for nothing”. ‘For nothing’ stress is important because Lang is underlining that he is fighting to prove himself but not for money. His goals are to prove himself to society and psychological satisfaction.

Rocky is punished with defeat by the script against Lang that Balboa does box training with capitalist practices and does not labor for the fight. The place where Balboa is training is a hall of luxurious hotel and it is arranged as a show place. He poses while people are taking shot of him, a girl comes and kisses him, he trains in company with an orchestra and people. On the other hand,

Mickey is insisting that they need to go to their previous gym: leaving from a garish capitalist place and passing through a modest working-class boxing gym. While Balboa is hoaxing with training, Lang works and works. Script awards Lang's 'top level labor' by making him win the first battle with Balboa. This penalty of script is also for Rocky's sumptuous life and gaudiness. Lang is most probably a man of back streets; he comes from back streets and defeats Balboa, how Balboa did to Creed back in the day.

Although Balboa lose the fight, he displays again that there is no difference for him between winning or losing: just after the fight, he asks Mickey who felt faint before the fight. Even their relation has been very up-and-down since the beginning, we see that these two men form a father-son relation through boxing sport in time. Film series does not make us meet the families of both of them; probably both of them would not have family or if even they would have, they have no relation with their families. We witness that Balboa was living alone in the first film, probably Mickey is living alone, so well. The father-son relation reveals more at the end of Lang fight: Balboa looks for him by saying "I need him here, I need him". He needs Mickey's compassion, support and conservancy. This love is not unrequited; Mickey cries in his deathbed and says to Balboa: "I love you, kid. I love you. Your instinct..".

Balboa is conscious highly of the main reason of losing Mickey is his class skipping. He, who is living in high economic class, hates from his social status. That hate is seen most clearly while he throws the motorcycle helmet to his own statue. Rocky looks to the statue with hate. He does not want new Rocky who has been incarnated on this statue. He wants Mickey, wants Adrian who was working in pet shop, wants the poor home that he was living in. He misses the poor boxing gym where he was training in. It is so clear that he has an intense contradiction between the character that he has in his core and the identity that is tried to clothe on him.

An event which surprises him happens in the middle of all these psychological collapse and tiredness: his former rival Apollo Creed visits him and tries to convince him a new fight with Clubber Lang. He tries to make Rocky gain hungry for success and ambition. Rocky accepts although he does not want it at first. Creed carries him to poor neighborhood in Los Angeles where he raised. The boxing gym here is a poor and modest gym like the place which Rocky was working with Mickey. Creed is aware of Rocky's fatigue; he wants to open a new window, a new road by rescuing him from the conditions of high-income class with a place alteration but it is futile. Rocky is still unhappy, sad and has no concentration.

The thing which shapes Rocky up and returns his motivation is the conversation he does with Adrian. Balboa confronts Creed after becoming lover with Adrian in first film, fights with Creed after gets ratification of Adrian who just recovers from the coma in second film, gains motivation

in third film after the conversation with his spouse whom persuades him to fight with Clubber Lang. This is just another example for Rocky's loyalty which continues all film serie to his spouse and family concept. He returns to his family in his every hard and troublesome case and he begins to every new struggle as family-based.

One of the scenes which contains American nationalism that we confront from time to time in whole series is in this film: Apollo wants Rocky to wear his American-flag trunk against Lang. He is, so to speak, leaving the representation of America to Balboa after himself. Besides that, American Armed Forces Marine Guards Band plays a nationalist march.

Rocky does not face with Lang to take the revenge or to win; he has built his existence which was collapsed after Mickey and now, he would like to 'realize himself' once more by fighting with Lang. Script awards Rocky's this approach by making him win.

Another point which can be underlined in this movie is the separation which is done by script between 'civilized black' and 'uncivilized black'. Black community which is minority in America has been associated with crime ceaselessly and considerable amount of black people have had difficulty to integrate to society causes that the black community has been always discriminated and marginalised. Film presents Apollo Creed as a prototype which is considered as an example to black community, especially in comparison with Clubber Lang. Apollo is a sportsman who is

handsome, athletic, having a nice family life, a decent and cultured black; namely a black whom system wants to see and is tamed by the system. The other end of the line is Clubber Lang, from his talking style to his wearing style, from his alone life to his aggression which cannot be endured, is a 'wild and not tamed' black person. The movie shows the separation between 'tamed' and 'not tamed' black lucidly and preaches to the black community in USA that only the black people who are dependent to the 'system', would be approved by the system.

Rocky Balboa's rival in fourth movie which contains a political dichotomy and Cold War is Ivan Drago, who is from Soviet Union which was the biggest enemy of America at these times. Balboa fought the boxers who are from the black community of America which is minority in first three films. This time, Balboa fights a boxer from another country and more important, from another political regime but before Balboa, the one who would like to give his lesson is Apollo Creed himself.

The most basic reason of Creed-Drago fight is Creed's psychological condition and his uneasiness. He tells this uneasiness to Balboa with a long speech: "It's crazy how people care about you when you are in that ring bleeding, but once you step out of that ring, you are ancient history.. I don't see anybody is asking for autographs, do you? ". Rocky tries to make him calm and open different philosophical angles with his sentences:"You know this fight you are having against the Russian.

Do you think maybe it ain't against him? Do you think maybe it's like you against you? .. You don't want to believe it but may be the show is over". Apollo is not happy to hear Rocky's discourse which reminds him his retirement and his glorious days that belong to the past: "That's easy for you to say. You're still on top. What happens when you're not on top? Then what? Where do we go? We sure can't be born again.. I don't want to change!! I like who I am!! .. but you can't change what you really are. Forget all this money and stuff around you. It don't change a thing. You and me don't even have a choice. We're born with a killer instinct, you ain't turn off and on like a radio".

It is seen by the help of semiotics that movie is casting a mission and an identity in regards of class standing and production relations to all three boxers. Apollo Creed represents an ostentatious and hedonist capitalism on his own. The one which Ivan Drago represents is the state socialism which he grew in: he is the incarnated form of this totalitarian regime. Balboa is representing American working class; he is the man of a real socialist understanding which grounds on human rights, sharer, emancipatory but not of a regime such as state socialism which suppresses the laborer people, with his humble, loyal to his family, passionless character. He stands right in the middle of two bad examples like Creed and Drago. He represents neither a flamboyant, wasteful,

consumption-based capitalism like Creed nor a state socialism which is based on oppression and authoritarianism that has become the official ideology of the state and torments people, like Drago. Drago is a human whom Soviet regime designs as a ‘machine-man’. An ‘overman’ who speaks less, who has no emotions and who has meaningless, blank stares. A conspicuous sample for the affect of technology to human body conversion but on his part, he is in a situation which is not taken as an example; on the contrary, in a situation which is pitiful. Building him as an example of success of the regime by the Soviet system is very unfortunate case in terms of Drago. For Gultekin, the adjectives that define Drago can be counted as big, cold, stern, brutal, technological and demonic: it is the embodiment of Soviet Russia (Gultekin, 2016:315).

The script firstly makes ‘ostentatious capitalism’ and ‘state socialism’ fight; namely Creed and Drago. The goal of the script is giving a lesson to capitalism that script does not like by the hand of state socialism that is another one which script does not like either. That means crash of two evil systems. Just before the fight, James Brown sings ‘Living in America’ song. The song is realizing an accolade and eulogy to American system with a splendiferous show which reminds us extravagant capitalism that rests on consumption. The lyrics of the song from beginning to end is going on as the extolling of American style capitalism. The song is beginning with the gigantic transportation net of America which serves to make easier transportation of goods and products: “super highways, coast to coast, easy to get anywhere, on the transcontinental overload, just slide

behind the wheel, how does it feel, when there's no destination that's too far, and somewhere on the way, you might find out who you are". But in other lyrics, song is accepting and confessing that there are 'prices' which must be paid in this system: "You might have to walk the fine line, You might take the hard line, But everybody's working overtime". The sentence of "everybody's working overtime" is sending a message to working class: 'you are not the only one who works overtime, every laborer in this country has to stand to this working conditions'.

The song is keeping going on to magnifying the life in America: "Living in America, Hand to hand, across the nation, Living in America, Got to have a celebration". Afterward, the song begins to count the important capitalist centres (metropole cities) of America: "You may not be looking for the promised land, But you might find it anyway, Under one of those old familiar names, Like New Orleans (New Orleans), Detroit City (Detroit City), Dallas (Dallas), Pittsburgh P.A. (Pittsburgh P.A.), New York City (New York City), Kansas City (Kansas City), Atlanta (Atlanta), Chicago and L.A." All this endeavor is to justify and to glorify American system again and again, against all world and moreover, has a secret claim that it is the best economic system and society type all around the world.

While James Brown is emblazoning America on the stage, Apollo Creed is coming from upper side of the hall by dancing to the ring. He wears an Uncle Sam top hat and a short. Both of them

have American flag colors and stars. Gultekin underlines that in Rocky 4, Soviet Russia is humiliated against America. Film is doing this by hoisting Ivan Drago to the ring from below and by carrying Apollo Creed to the ring from above (Gultekin, 2016:316). This action, albeit being symbolic, contains a strong message in the relationship of countries and proves that these two boxers do not just a sport encounter. They were also latent representatives of their country. With his sport clothe which is containing the colors of the Soviet flag and the sickle hammer symbol, and with his shorts which is embellished with the colors and the stars of the American flag, Drago and Creed reveal their stand so obvious.

How soever the fight is arranged and begun as a ‘goodwill exhibition fight’, it could not have been expected to continue on this way at political Cold War atmosphere of 1980s between two countries. The result of this crash becomes very heavy: Drago kills Creed in the ring. That situation is exact opposite of the case which capitalism gives an end to state socialism at 1991, 6 years later. Capitalism gives its last breath in the ring with Creed; script, fined to the flamboyant side of capitalism which rests show, entertainment and consumption.

After deciding the fight with Drago just after Apollo’s tragic death, Balboa finds himself in a discussion / arguement with Adrian, like on every critic bend of his life, as usual. To Adrian’s worry by saying “and for that, you’re willing to lose everything?”, Rocky replies by his manner which does not care the financial conditions and advantages: ”Adrian, this ain’t everything. This

house, the cars, and all the stuff we got, it ain't everything. There's a lot more than this, Adrian".

Rocky continued his demeaning attitude, which dominates him throughout the entire film series, to capitalism by saying that his financial opportunities have no content and meaning.

Rocky chooses Moscow for payoff. Balboa's answer and purpose is to strike the state socialism in its own home. Balboa will fight Drago on Xmas day in Moscow, so that can be considered as he fights against state atheism on a religious day. The humble and innocent representer of American working class is goaling to knock out the conceit and robotic representer of Soviet regime. It is openly understood that he is also looking for a spiritual and mental catharsis by moving away from the city / country where the death was happened, and to charge himself. Choosing this 'different place' as the opponent's country shows his desire to be closest to his fear. He is aware that he can overcome that fear as long as he is close to it and confronts it. This is a compatible choice with the facts of psychology science.

Salyer argues that Rocky can stand on his own feet after Apollo's death by the help of lessons which he gets from Mickey and Apollo on life and on boxing (Salyer, 2009:126). The fact that he does not need any longer to someone else's coaching indicates that he has completed his mental and spiritual development. Rocky is 'completed' mentally and psychologically; Rocky is in maturity stage of his boxing career and of his private life.

Balboa is realizing a natural preparation without the help of technology in his whole training process. On the other hand, Drago represents and uses technology in accordance with his mechanized constitution. “The usual nature metaphors (wood chopping, mountain climbing) supply the needed index for distinguishing the good American from the overly technological Russian who, nevertheless, converts to the creed of “for me”-ness and himself rebels against his masters before being drubbed into submission by his natural superior” (Ryan-Kellner, 1988, Chapter 8, publish.iupress.indiana.edu) Rocky film series has a claim that the natural is superior to the technological and the technology is criticized (Gultekin, 2016:315).

Ryan-Kellner argues that heroic images in American films of 1970s are a reflection of the desire for the concept of 'salvation leader' in society (Ryan-Kellner, 2010:338). This hero image is based on 'natural' elements, and the characters built as his opposite represent rationality and technology. This hero follows the instincts within his image, but does not follow the rational attitude that comes from outside to his own existence (Ryan-Kellner, 2010:342). Rocky Balboa fits this definition very well. His irrational / childish / emotional personality is based on totally his instincts and his manners can be considered an open declaration against modernity, which is based on rationality, industry and technology concepts.

In every action during the training period, he and his team show a stance against the Soviet regime. For instance, he helps a villager whose car is stuck in the snow to get his car out of the snow. On

the other side, his trainer Duke defeats Soviet chaperon at chess; namely a man from American working class defeats a man who represents Soviet regime. The message is so clear: we are not against the people who live in Soviet Union; we are against Soviet regime.

The concepts of 'family' and 'religion' are also highlighted in the fourth film. Adrian's coming and joining the Rocky's camp means reunification of the family. His wife's arrival increases Rocky's motivation and the last ring which is needed for the victory is added to the chain. This motivation reaches the maximum point when he tears Drago's picture. This is also the point where he overcomes his fear but his fear is not against Drago; his fear is against to he himself. He will later elaborate his philosophy of fear while he talks with his pupil Tommy Gunn in the fifth film. The jealousy of Paulie, who is another member of family, to Rocky in previous films converts a pure admiration at the fourth film: ".. if I could just unzip myself and step out and be someone else, I'd want to be you. You're all heart, Rock" (After saying that, Paulie kisses Rocky from his cheek). Paulie's admiration is not for his strength and charisma but for his clean and honest heart, that's why he wants to be in his place. And Rocky prays before the fight, as a believer American. That pray must be considered as a stance against state atheism of Soviet Union. Ben Mna is thinking that this stance is valid for a lot of American film heroes of 1980s: "Reagan-era heroes who have taken up the fight against atheistic (or post-religious) adversaries include John Rambo,

Indiana Jones, Luke Skywalker, Rocky Balboa (in Rocky IV), and Maverick in Top Gun” (Ben Mna, 2021:302).

No matter how hard he falls, Rocky's ability which is to be able to get up from the ground represents the character of the working class that never steps back and breaks down. As the fight continues, Rocky increasingly gains the Soviet crowd to himself. The crowd noticed that he is not a selfish machine. Drago, on the other hand, screams against the crowd: “I fight to win for me .. for me”. The emphasis on "for me" is very important here. That is one of the main differences between Rocky and his competitors. Apollo Creed, Clubber Lang, Ivan Drago and Tommy Gunn whom we will see in the fifth film of Rocky series are always fighting ‘for themselves’. Rocky is fighting ‘for people’; when he wins, he wins for people but not for himself. His altruism and representing the right values are awarded by people at the end of the fight: Even though he wraps the American flag, the Soviet people surround him in the ring and show their liking to him and Politburo is applauding Rocky. This appreciation he receives is much more valuable than defeating Drago.

In the fifth movie of series, Rocky returns to his own and real class; low-income class. He loses all his fortune with Paulie's fault. Moreover, and worse, a permanent brain damage has been occurred in Rocky’s brain due to the his fight with Drago. That means there is no way by boxing

to earn his former fortune and to return to high income class. So, like following a circle, they went back to where they had started.

The first sign of class change is that Rocky finds his leather jacket and hat which he uses in the first film in the attic and wears them. By doing so, Rocky gets rid of his expensive clothes and suits, and wears the dress that he really feels himself to be belonged. Rocky begins to smoke again; how he used to do while he was living in this poor neighborhood. However, his subconscious does not embrace easily this ‘new’ old situation. He is embarrassed to his wife to make her live again in poor district and says to her: "This is only temporary, you know”.

In spite of the fact, their former class is decisive not to leave them easily. Boxing manager George Washington Duke, who is the representative of bourgeois class in this film, is showing a serious effort to make Rocky fight again. He calls Rocky’s home and talks to Adrian. Duke tries to insult Balboa family with his words:”.. you can start living like human beings again”. Adrian put him in his place by her courteous and wise answer: "Listen, Mr. Duke. We are living like human beings. You oughta try it sometimes”. The proposition of Duke which promises to return Rocky to his splendid days and humiliates Rocky’s family has two meanings actually: capitalist system still considers Rocky as ‘a cow which must be milked’ and other meaning is considering low-income class people as ‘not human being’.

In another scene, Duke approaches Balboa and tries to prompt and provoke him with an exciting speech: “You respect the dreams of the long shots and the little people. The never-wills identify with you, and identification is the key to public success. You’re a true champion, a true product of the people. Now sell it. Sell it while there are still buyers. They ain’t gonna last forever..”. Duke’s capitalist approach to boxing sport is one of the main criticising goals of Rocky series. This approach becomes more evident while Duke is scolding new champion candidate Union Cane: “I own the paper on you, boy. You will fight who I tell you, where I tell you and how I tell you. You got that?”. Duke considers Union Cane and all of the boxers who are dependent to him like his boxer slaves and does not ever entitle them.

Adrian starts working in the pet store again. Her aim is to be close to Rocky because Rocky runs Mickey's boxing hall. It becomes clearer that Rocky has never changed in terms of class concept, by the question which Rocky asks Adrian: “Yo, Adrian! Did we ever leave this place?”, by referring that poor neighborhood. Adrian replies him:”I don’t know”.

The most important feature that distinguishes the fifth film of the series from the first four films is that Balboa transforms into a master in this film. Rocky, who is trained by Mickey and Apollo in first three films both physically and mentally, finds an opportunity to transfer his knowledge and experience to a young boxer. The name of this boxer is Tommy Gunn. Tommy Gunn character has a key importance for the rest of the movie. He is played by Tommy Morrison, who is a real

heavy weight champion boxer and who did many mistakes in the rest of his life similarly Tommy Gunn. He died when he was only 44.

At their first encounters, Rocky is very reluctant to train Tommy because Rocky is aware of his ambitious nature and disturbed. Unlike Rocky, Paulie considers Tommy Gunn as an ‘opportunity’. Rocky is persuaded to train him after Tommy Gunn talked about his past to him cause Gunn said that he has poverty which Rocky had erstwhile. Gunn has stroke the right chord: that similar ‘class’ situation is a case which Rocky cannot be indifferent to. His ‘labor subconscious’ tells him that he has to claim that young, poor, unexperienced, countryside boy.

If a master forms an emotional relation with his student, the reason is that he sees himself on him. Balboa sees on him a dominance, perseverance and hunger that he can not find in his own son. Gunn’s problematic background with his father makes Rocky closer to him, Tommy says in a family dinner at Rocky’s home:”.. the first guy I ever knocked out was my father. And now, when I get in the ring, it’s like all I see is him. That’s kind of sick’, huh?”. Tommy says this sentence while the issue is that Robert, Rocky’s son, is beaten at the school. Robert demands from his father to teach him fighting but Adrian tells Tommy: "Tommy, we’re trying to raise our son so he can handle his problems with his mind, not his muscles”.

Gunn's 'fatherlessness' probably makes Rocky produce a 'father' figure which he thinks that Gunn needs eminently. Gunn is not only a son figure for him, but also he is a 'successor', a 'heir' for him. So, in these respects, Balboa is like having found a treasure. Balboa makes master-pupil relationship start with the following words after a long speech which is about 'fear' concept: "... these are the things that was taught to me, and if you want, I'd like to teach to you". As Tommy follows Balboa's steps to become a world champion, Balboa wants to be for Tommy what Mickey is for himself. That sentence exhibits Balboa's thought on Tommy: "Remember, I'm like this angel sitting on your shoulder, okay? I ain't gonna let nothing happen to you, okay?". Also, the importance of religion for Balboa continues in this movie as in other films: before every training or every fight of Tommy, he visits Father Carmine with Tommy, although he speaks English but Father Carmine blesses him in Italian.

Tommy is realizing his first fights in small local hall where Balboa had realized his professional fights before he became world champion. Tommy Gunn is in the newspapers now but always he is mentioned in relation to Balboa: Balboa's pupil, Balboa's clone, Balboa's boy, Rocky's robot, Rocky's boy.. or by referring his surname, Rocky's Gunn (gun). Depending on his rising career, Tommy's ambitious personality becomes more explicit: he is no longer a humble and prudent young man who came from the countryside. He does not like ever being in the shadow of Balboa.

At the same time, like every young and inexperienced sportsman from the county, he is enamoured of wealth and fame. It does not take long time that Duke character, who is the hunter of this kind of athletes, approaches Tommy. Duke hires a luxury house for him, introduces a beautiful woman who will later become his girlfriend. His passionate personality is revealed more in his question to Rocky after a fight that he wins: "Hey, man, now am I gonna get a shot at the title?"

Rocky can not give him a title.. but Duke can. Rocky and Tommy's breakup time comes in a Xmas time. Although the only common point of these two men who perceive, interpret and aim the boxing different since their beginning point of their relation is boxing, their separation is also based on boxing. Actually, Rocky was so hopeful that Tommy would be with them at Xmas night. Rocky, Adrian and Paulie prepared a Santa Claus ambiance for Xmas but it is needed to tell Rocky the fact which everyone else is aware of but Rocky about Tommy, and Adrian does that: "Well, may be he doesn't think this is family".

Tommy Gunn, Duke, Tommy's girlfriend Karen and Duke's man Sheets visit Rocky's modest home in low income neighborhood, with extremely arrogant and humiliating attitudes. Duke says, "Only in America. Having the best, wearing the best. But to keep it up, you gotta stay on top". Sheet adds to this sentence, "Nobody remembers number two, kiddo" and Karen says: "I sure don't". All these 'new' people around Tommy are sharks who have discovered his financial value

in terms of the system and they are extremely determined to exploit him. The value of Tommy and all other professional athletes in terms of the system is as long as they stay at the top. Being at the top and staying as long as possible there mean that the athlete earns as much money as possible. After all, your value for the system is how much you are close to money and how much the system is able to make money through you.

Rocky's efforts to persuade him continue inside and outside the house. He would like to keep him away from the traps of the system but Tommy does not deserve that. Rocky's endeavor is like to take off a ship which has already been sunk: "I'm talking about your rep, Tommy. Look, don't sell out. Don't. We don't need this guy (by referring Duke) .. the thing I'm trying to do is what Mick done for me. He tried to keep me away from the dirty part of the business, the way I'm trying to do for you".

Despite Rocky's all protectionism, Tommy prefers the system. He sees boxing as a 'job', a job which he will make a lot of money. In regards of his perspective to boxing, he differs entirely from 'laborer' Rocky. He steps on the gas and leaves from 'poor neighborhood' with his passionate friends like himself. Adrian again comes to the rescue of Rocky, who is left completely alone in the middle of the street after Tommy's abandon. Family concept is aggrandized again in Rocky series, as it has been done a lot of times throughout the whole series. She brings a coat on Rocky and protects him from December cold.

It is easily understood that one of the goals of Rocky's endeavor is to gain respect again as Tommy's trainer: the respect of his family, of boxing world, of people around him and generally of all people. The respect which he thinks that he has already lost. That 'loser' feeling comes off very palpable while he is making a long and touching speech to Adrian: "What, do you think I'm stupid? I am not as dumb as you think I am !! .. Look, you don't think I can smell it? I see where we are. Adrian, I don't want this no more. I want something good for the family. I don't want this. I mean, did I come back here and get my brains beat out for these guys to say "hey, there goes Balboa? I am just another bum in the neighborhood !! I didn't want this !!".

It is clear that Balboa has a shame feeling against all the people who trust him, especially his wife. Losing his fortune out of his will pushed him to where he came, from high income class to low income class. He turned this situation into a shame and tried to eliminate his shame feeling by preparing an heir apparent.

But there is a thing which Rocky, who wins in the ring with Tommy Gunn, has been forgetting: he is losing his family outside of the ring. He produced a 'so called' son with Tommy Gunn instead of his own son. He forgot his own family and was winnowed after the energy and ambition of Tommy Gunn. Rocky repeated the same reaction with Apollo Creed. Apollo was complaining about 'not being an important person anymore for people' after his retirement: "It's crazy how

people care about you when you are in that ring bleeding, but once you step out of that ring, you are ancient history.. I don't see anybody is asking for autographs, do you? “. Actually, Rocky must have felt the same ‘unheeded’ situation due to his retirement and tried to regain the respect which society had for him at one time.

I think so everyone is aware of the fact that Tommy takes advantage from Balboa's boxing knowledge and experience on the way through being a champion else Balboa, and the slaps that Rocky will get from Tommy Gunn have not been finished yet. When Rocky is watching Tommy Gunn's fight with Union Cane for world championship, he resembles his tension and excitement to himself; still, he is chasing to form similarities and analogies between himself and Tommy. That means he has still hope from him. Rocky hits a punching bag in TV room when Tommy hits on TV to his rival but at the end of fight, when Tommy Gunn wins and becomes a world champion, he displays again he does deserve neither support nor training of Rocky cause he thanks to Duke!! He thanks to him because he opened the way to him to become a world champion. Tommy's greed for becoming a world champion makes him grateful to Duke, but not to Balboa. Tommy is the man of the result, not man of the process and labor, how capitalism demands from him. If his character would be different and if he would like to be part of Rocky's life and family, if even he would lose the championship fight against Union Cane, that does not matter for Rocky and his close circle. Cause people has never evaluated Rocky with the results that he gets in the ring and

they are ready to do the same thing for Tommy and for any boxer who demands their love but Tommy preferred the results and the championships.

The choice and the support of people emerges at the end of the fight, while crowd is shouting the name of Rocky although Tommy becomes a world champion. Adrian underlines the same fact, which crowd underlines indirectly by shouting the name of Rocky, directly by saying Rocky: "I told you, you could give him everything but you can't give him your heart".

George Washington Duke would like to turn this case into benefit again, he configures a fight in his mind: teacher against student, old lion against young lion. He wants to make master and pupil fight with each other. But Tommy's thought is different, he comes to Rocky's neighborhood and wants to take the revenge of humbling that he received just after to be world champion. He shouts like an insane by referring the appellation of media to him, which is related with Rocky's name: "And I ain't nobody's robot! Nobody's boy!". Tommy acts with the same psychology while he shouts George Washington Duke: "Hey, you don't own me!! .. You don't own me .. Nobody does". He is a young man who tries to be himself, he doesn't want the extension or property of someone but chooses the wrong side as a poor person from the lower class while he is trying to do that. He can't realize the fact that the first thing which capitalism is stealing from you is 'you yourself'.

Capitalism adds people into its constitution by assimilating them, melts them in its wheels, makes them lose personalities and ideals and then, shapes this ‘play dough’ as it wishes.

Price is talking about the ‘commerce’ side of boxing in capitalism: “In the ring, it is culturally acceptable to beat a man and sometimes to death as the commodified nature of the boxers’ bodies distances the audience from appreciating them as real presences” (Price, 2014:101). What the capitalist system expects from all boxers and the people who like box is that accepting the commodification of boxers as a normal element in subconscious. This point is a perspective that completely contradicts with Rocky's stance because Rocky has never been accepted being a commodity.

That is the most important thing which Rocky tries to teach to Tommy: being an individual based on ‘class consciousness’. A conscious laborer (in their example, a boxer) never sells him to the system. A laborer never stoops to the level of system; on the contrary, system shows favour to him. Rocky realizes this dignified stance and never gives up from himself, even at the peak of his wealth. He becomes rich but he never becomes a capitalist but Tommy, as a poor boxer, was pretty ready to sell himself to the system and to play the game with a capitalist mental.

Tommy still is in the endeavor to seek respect. He becomes a world champion, he has a luxurious car, he has a beautiful girl friend, he has a lot of money, he is famous but no one respects him. He hisses like a snake against Rocky, who is the last person who lost his respect to him and who is

the first person believes in him: “I want my respect”. Rocky accepts this challenge: “Well, come and get it”. They begin a street fight in a low income neighborhood.

The wallop which Rocky gives to Tommy should be seen as punishment to Tommy’s betrayal to low income class. Actually Tommy Gunn, if we look in regards of semiotics again, represents the American working class whose class consciousness was disintegrated in the neoliberal attack of the system throughout the 1980s. Rocky, who is the representative of lower class and who is the most loyal character to the values of lower class among all characters of Rocky serie, is the one who realizes this punishment as his former master. Rocky finishes his punishment by punching manager George Washington Duke and knocks him out by one punch. We can imagine that George Washington Duke is in the movie as an imitation of the famous boxing manager Don King. Duke, with his physical appearance and attitudes, is very similar to Don King. In that respect, that punch is also a kind of retribution which is an answer of low class to the system. Rocky shows that low income class is the subject which can knock out inequality, exploitation and the people like Duke, who is fed from capitalist system like a leech.

In the sixth and the last movie of series begins with Mason Dixon, a black boxer who is not liked by the people. Rocky is feeding the turtle like he used to do in first movie of serie. He lives in an

ordinary house in a poor neighborhood. Adrian is dead, Rocky visits her grave but his son does not. His son works in a plaza, he has become a white-collar employee.

This last film of series makes Rocky a ‘petty bourgeois’. He has a small restaurant whose name is “Adrian’s Restaurant”. He is making himself happy with his old memories, he constantly tells his customers about his past. In fact, what he does is that people who are not satisfied with his current life: living in his past or imaginary future. If he is older, to live in the past, if he is young, to live in the future which he dreams. He is neither a worker % 100 nor a bourgeois % 100 but because of the poor neighborhood where he lives and he has a restaurant; he is still a person from the lower class.

Rocky's change in terms of property relations is also a point to be examined. Rocky, a poor worker in the first movie, continues this position in the second movie. He became extremely rich in the third movie and continues to be rich in the fourth movie. In the fifth movie, although he lost his great fortune, the script does not make him a laborer again, he becomes a petty bourgeois who has a boxing hall like Mickey. In the sixth movie, he continues to be petty bourgeois; only the sector has been changed from gym ownership to restaurant ownership.

Becoming a bourgeoisie, even if it is petty bourgeois, may evoke the idea that it contradicts with Rocky's state of representing the low-income class and the labor. However, this concern is unfounded because the movie series is not interested in the level of Rocky's property. Rocky is a

low-class worker in the first and second films, a top-class rich in the third and fourth films, and a middle-class bourgeois in the fifth and sixth films but he is always the representative of the values of low-income class and more importantly, he is exhibiting a challenger stance which film series thinks that a laborer should have.

The film series has never allowed Rocky to stay away from two things: a woman constantly in his life and religion. The sixth film adds a new woman after Adrian to his life. This woman is a bartender woman whom he met at the bar. He learns later that Marie was the girl who he was trying to keep away from smoking in first Rocky movie. Thus, Rocky is neither a man who is left alone nor a man who hangs with many different women throughout the six films. The film series makes choices which fit the conservative culture that dominates the majority of American society. The concepts of adhering to one person from the opposite sex (whether there is a marriage institution or not, but preferably marriage) and religion (Christianity) are underlined many times in whole series.

Mason Dixon has a search for respect like Tommy Gunn. He wants people's respect, but he wants his own respect to himself first. In fact, being aware that people do not respect them causes to lose their self-esteem after a while. Actually, the reason that majority of people do not respect to them is people are aware of that they are boxers of system, they have already sold themselves to the

system. Even if they come from the lower class, they are far from representing the lower class. As demonstrated in the Rocky example, representing the lower class has nothing to do with the level of ownership, that is a matter of consciousness and posture. While a rich person can defend the life and future of the poor, a poor person may not complain to live in capitalism, can envy rich people and can vote for rich candidates in political elections.

Dixon is not the only person who is involved with 'system' in this film; the film also brings to the table plaza-based capitalism through Rocky's white-collar son who is working in a plaza. His son, Robert, was not cared by his father in fifth movie of series. His father preferred Tommy Gunn to take care, to educate, to train and almost to be a father. At the end of the movie, Rocky and Robert are reconciled again but at the beginning of sixth movie, it is seen that Robert has a very cold and distant relationship with his father. Throughout the movie, Rocky tries to regain her son. When he decides to fight Dixon, he first reports the case to his son, which is like getting his permission at some point. In fact, what Rocky who represents the lower class is trying to do is to take his son, who represents the middle class, to on his own side. In terms of semiotics, the lower class is intended to gain the middle class to itself.

His son does not leave this effort unanswered and resigns from his job. With this resignation, the middle class prefers the side of the lower class at the stance against the system and breaks its bond with the system. Robert says to Rocky: "I didn't fit in there", by referring his former working

place. He meets his father at the grave of his mother; when his father asks “so, what are you gonna do?”, he replies as: "right now, I'd rather be with you".

It is not important that Rocky loses the match at the end of the movie. As in the first movie, Rocky loses in the ring but he is the winner at outside the ring in the last movie, so well. Balboa walked out the hall with dignity; he also gained the appreciation and applause of the people. He completes both his mission to the American working class and his own self-actualization.

As A Conclusion

The first conclusion of all the facts which are examined throughout our article is that the Rocky series starts to bring the despair of the 1970s American working class to the cinema screen. Balboa showed us how the stance of an American worker, or a worker in capitalism in general, should be. Rocky, who has roved at various economic levels throughout the six films, has never been a person of his own interests; he has always done whatever class consciousness has told him to do. One of the most important differences of Rocky is that the class changing to up or to down does not have any effect on him. The class changes he experienced during the film series did not lead to any change in his philosophy of life, his relationship with people and his class consciousness. Rocky's unpretentious attitude which does not care about money and the benefits of money is both a

message to American society where capitalism is experienced in the most exorbitant level and a suggestion that labor should never be kneeling in front of the capital.

When Balboa falls with the blows during the fights, Mickey was shouting at him to get off the ground: 'get up .. get up, you son of a b...h'. Actually, the one who is getting up and should get up from the ground is American working class, not Balboa's exhausted body. We can understand how an unconscious Balboa, who is embodied form of the working class, can get up from ground at 14th round at the end of first film. Working class never dies no matter how much it gets a wallop; it falls down but it achieves to stand on somehow. Mickey was calling the working class to unite, solidarity and struggle, indirectly and through Balboa.

“.. Rocky series often portrays in brutal detail the blood, sweat, and beating of bodies and the dirty conditions in which its characters live, these films portray what is often elided by capitalism” (Price, 2014:95). Rocky's wretched face at the end of each match is actually the state of the labor class under the capitalist wheels. This outward appearance is in line with Marx's perspective linking capital accumulation to labor: “capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt” (www.marxists.org). As a boxing laborer, Balboa is winning his every fight by suffering, with difficulty, laboriously and with a great scramble. Just like any worker who deserves his income with blood and dirt, by giving labor in the workplace all day..

Another point that makes Rocky 'becoming' to viewers is its self-actualization process. This fact is occurred to some extent in the first film but actually, spreads over all six films. The process begins with Rocky is notified that Creed chose him in boxer catalog and results in that Rocky retires from boxing permanently and leaves the ring in his last movie. Rocky gains the approval of American society as an example of an honest, consistent, pure-hearted, untainted, hardworking American low- income class man in his private life rather than her bright boxing career. Rocky's self-actualization is spiritual in the eyes of people. He is always childish, innocent, and the performer of the right action. He has always made the right choices ethically, has never compromised his principles and the moral quality he has shown throughout his life. All these features have built him as an exemplary person. In his own words, Salyer describes how Rocky built himself: "Over the 30 years of Rocky's journey, he changed from a no good thug to a respected friend, husband, father, mentor, and champion. Most important he acquired the right balance of self-respect and confidence" (Salyer, 2009:132). Also, the 'individual' stance which Balboa has developed against the system is closely related with doing an 'individual' sport: "Boxing is not a team sport; it is one of will power, self-determination, respect, confidence, and strength" (Salyer, 2009:136).

The transformative aspect of Rocky has been influential in the transformation of all the people around him. Initially, as Price states, “.. Mick views Rocky as a means for his own profit” (Price, 2014:87). “Mick’s attempts to profit from Rocky and his remarks about eating the turtles are consistent with a capitalist relation to others, where any animal, humans included, can be rendered as merely disposable and a means for profit” (Price, 2014:95). Although Mickey and Paulie are people from the lower class, they have internalized the capitalism in which they were born and raised extremely and we see this fact in many examples throughout the film serie. It is Balboa's childlike soul that makes them awake from limitlessly and without question obedience to capitalism. In time, by Rocky's influence, they discovered the emotional and human side within themselves. Another point was that they saw the emotional and humanitarian aspect within Rocky: while Mickey was dying on his deathbed after Clubber Lang fight, he was stating his admiration for Rocky. On the other hand, Paulie tells Rocky just before the fight with Ivan Drago that if he could unzip to someone else, he would like to be Balboa. Balboa's innocent, clean, emotional personality made him gain the long run; his character could change the perspectives of two men from his close circle, to life and to himself.

Rocky's dedication to the concepts of "religion" and "family", which are two essential elements of the conservative culture, is consistent with his moral cleanliness. Rocko is a man who has a cross on the bedside. He prays in the hospital church while his wife is in a coma; he prays in the ring

before fighting against Drago in the Soviet Union that made atheism a part of his official ideology, he makes priest bless him before the training with his pupil, Tommy Gunn.

Likewise, the concept of family is extremely important to Balboa: he preserved the 'right' woman Adrian whom he found in the first movie until Adrian's death. She is the strongest fist of Rocky while fighting to death against Creed in the 2nd film, Lang in the 3rd film, and Drago in the 4th film. In the 5th film, Adrian managed to keep Rocky in the family with her usual matronly attitude, despite his distancing from his family and especially his son. The sensitive, naive, quiet Adrian is built as an ideal partner for Rocky and makes the Balboa family an exemplary American family. Rocky's respect for the concepts of family and religion is in line with the parameters of American society, which is many of whom embrace these concepts. Although Rocky is handsome and has a spectacular body and a famous sportsman, Rocky has no contact with any woman along whole serie except a young girl's small kiss in Rocky 3. This case is very far and hard possibility in American societal conditions for a famous sportsman. Apart from his love for his spouse, Rocky almost draws a portrait of a 'genderless' man.

His conservative feature naturally contains a patriarchal side to some. For instance, Rocky has a boy, not a daughter. Gultekin assumes that patriarchal understanding expects, especially from a hero, to have a boy. The boy is a factor that strengthens the ideological stance of patriarchy

(Gultekin, 2016:318). He could have had a daughter but that wouldn't have worked well for his conservative trait. A boy who can maintain his reputation and social status in society is more effective in terms of Rocky's image, especially in the view of the male audience.

The latent political discourses of the Rocky series are also in line with the expectations of the American society from the movie series. Although we argue that the Rocky series is on the side of a lower class and it secretly whispers socialism to the ears of viewers, we must admit that the series follows a line which is compatible with the major perception of American society. Rocky's fights with black boxers in the first three and sixth films satisfy the distant and cold feelings of a considerable portion of American white majority towards American black minority. In the fourth film, Balboa cuts Ivan Drago down to size. Drago is not an American and comes from the state socialist regime; that situation addresses to Americans with a nationalist feeling. Only in fifth film, he fights with a white, rural-rooted, low income American person. So, in that respect, the fifth movie is only movie in all series which is violating the general expectation of American society but in all other films, the script is organized and going on what 'majority' of the society wants to see.

As a requirement of the natural relationship of cinema with society, the films of Rocky series has always been fed by the conjuncture of the time when they were made. Especially the first two films reflect the despair of white American lower class people in the 1970s very successfully. According

to Gultekin, the mass which the first Rocky film speaks to is white American working class but in the time, Rocky series has gained an identity that preserves the image of America and of American society against the rest of the world (Gultekin, 2016:319). Describing the despair of the lower class as a lower- class worker in the 1970s, Rocky glorified America in a triumphant manner in the third and fourth films in 1980s, which is very compatible with the neo-liberal attitude that blessed capitalism of 1980s. In the fifth film which was filmed at 1990, Rocky returns to the lower-class neighborhood and becomes one of the workers who became incapable and bewildered against the capital assault of 1980s. Rocky films have fulfilled their function by playing the role due to the then-societal conditions.

The Rocky series is not just a 'watchable' movie series which promises the pleasure of watching to the viewers; it has a mission in terms of American society and the American working class. Balboa has been drawn as a model for American and world workers. He owes his idealness not to surrender to capitalism. Rocky Balboa is the response of working class to capitalism; he is the pride of working class which the working class hasn't given up at whole series.

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