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RHETORIC AND PROSODY OF JUDICIAL DISCOURSE IN MASS MEDIA

We inevitably deal with the spread of the legal practice to the masses to inform the population about current criminal cases and their court decisions. There are few works dedicated to the studies of the rhetoric and prosody of the judicial discourse both in domestic and international science space. This article is devoted to the study of the rhetorical function of prosody in judicial discourse. It is known that the interest in the study of the language prosody has begun to manifest with the advent of new computer programs that allow analyzing the prosody, especially, the temporal variables, such as speed, duration, intonation, and pause of speech. Accordingly, this article aims to work on the study of the rhetorical function of prosody in judicial discourse. Taking into account the complexity of the polyfunctionality of prosody as a subject of research, the study of the prosodic function of judicial discourse in mass media in the context of rhetoric allows understanding the meaning of prosodic processes in speech and determining the intention of news. The study was based on the news coverings of the criminal case of Ezra McCandles, which was considered in the United States from 2018 to 2020. The article used research methods such as rhetorical discourse analysis, as well as acoustic analysis using the Praat computer program. The prosodic analysis of judicial discourse in the context of rhetoric revealed the prosodic narrative techniques such as alternating intensity, rise, and fall of the tone, speech pauses, which aimed to impact the perception of the case by the listeners.

Key words: rhetorical features, acoustic analysis, speech prosody, judicial discourse.

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Бұқаралық ақпарат құралдарындағы сот дискурсының риторикасы мен просодиясы

Тек Қазақстанда ғана емес, сонымен қатар бүкіл әлемде де ағымдағы қылмыстық істер мен олардың сот шешімдері туралы халықты ақпараттандыру мақсатында құқықтық тәжірибені тарату мәселесі өзекті болып отыр. Бүгінгі күнге дейін отандық және халықаралық ғылымда сот дискурсындағы просодияның риторикалық қызметін зерттеуге арналған еңбектер аз. Тілдің просодиялық деңгейін зерттеуге қызығушылық просодияны, атап айтқанда сөйлеудің жылдамдығы, ұзақтығы, интонациясы және үзілісі сияқты сөйлеудің уақыттық сипаттамаларын қарастыратын жаңа компьютерлік программаның пайда болуымен көріне бастады. Сондықтан бұл мақалада сот дискурсындағы просодияның риторикалық қызметін зерттеу бойынша атқарылған жұмыстар сипатталды. Просодияның көп функционалдығы мен оның күрделілігінен БАҚ-тағы сот ісінің просодикалық қызметін риторика аясында зерттеу, сөйлеудегі просодикалық процестердің мәнін түсінуге мүмкіндік береді. Бұл зерттеу үшін Америка Құрама Штаттарында 2018-2020 жылдар аралығында қаралған Эзра МакКэндлстің қылмыстық ісі бойынша жаңалықтардан алынған материалдар қолданылды. Жұмыста риторикалық-дискурстық талдау, сондай-ақ Praat компьютерлік программасы арқылы акустикалық талдау сияқты зерттеу әдістері қолданылды. Риторика контексіндегі сот дискурсын просодикалық талдау негізінде тыңдаушылардың істі қабылдауына әсер етуге бағытталған ауыспалы қарқындылығы бар просодикалық баяндау әдістері, сондай-ақ тонның көтерілуі мен төмендеуі, сөйлеу үзілістері анықталды.

Түйін сөздер: риторикалық ерекшеліктер, акустикалық талдау, сөйлеу просодиясы, сот дискурсы.

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Риторика и просодия судебного дискурса в средствах массовой информации

Не только в Казахстане, но также и во всем мире актуален вопрос распространения юридической практики с целью информирования населения о текущих уголовных делах и их судебных решениях. На сегодняшний день имеются малочисленные работы, посвященные исследованию риторической функции просодии в судебном дискурсе, как в отечественной, так и в международной науке. Как известно, интерес к изучению просодического уровня языка начал проявляться с появлением новых компьютерных программ, позволяющих рассмотреть просодику, а именно временные характеристики речи, такие как скорость, продолжительность, интонация и пауза речи. Соответственно, данная статья посвящена работе по изучению риторической функции просодии в судебном дискурсе. Из-за многофункциональности просодии и его сложности изучение просодической функции судебного дела по СМИ в контексте риторики позволяет понимать смысл просодических процессов в речи в новостях. Для проведения данного исследования были использованы материалы из новостей по уголовному делу Эзры МакКэндлс, которое рассматривалось в период с 2018 по 2020 год в США. В работе были применены такие методы исследования, как риторическо-дискурсивный анализ, а также акустический анализ с применением компьютерной программы Praat. Просодический анализ судебного дискурса в контексте риторики позволил выявить приемы просодического повествования, такие как чередование интенсивности, повышения и понижения тона, речевые паузы, призванные воздействовать на восприятие дела слушателями.

Ключевые слова: риторические особенности, акустический анализ, просодическая сторона речи, судебный дискурс.

Introduction

We are inevitably dealing with electronically mediated communication, especially delivering the legal practice to the masses, to increase the awareness of the larger sections of the lay of the population about the current sociopolitical issues and criminal cases with their court decisions. There are very few studies dedicated to the prosodic features of judicial discourse considering the media intrusion to the legal practices of the court has been comparatively recently. The functional and prosody specifics of the judicial discourse represent the most intriguing and the least scrutinized branches of linguistics.

Thus, important aspects of the judicial discourse in the court chamber, and mass media news coverings attract the attention of the researchers and scholars. Malphurs, R. (2013:) states that communication is particularly well-studied discipline in humans' daily life, but few scholars have been concerned about the Court's oral argument from a rhetorical perspective.

This paper aims to determine the rhetoric and prosody of the judicial discourse in mass media. Our analysis rests on the case of Ezra McCandless – one of the closely-watched cases of 2018-2020.

Materials and methods

There is without doubt a current interest in judicial discourse. The rapid invasion of media in all aspects of the social and professional life of people produces extensive changes to the communication and judicial discourse paradigms. Judicial discourse in the court chambers and media coverings show that the way of accusation and defending are based on the rational, emotional, and ethical appeal to judge the action of the defendant for or against him or her. As an example serves the process of the trial testimony of Ezra McCandless, which was live on Court TV that could be watched by other people, and an announcer and two invited guests kept discussing the situation during the break. To analyze the rhetoric and prosody of this case, we used the testimony trial lasting 1 hour, 18 minutes; in particular, we analyzed parts of the discussion in the testimony and other news covering in terms of rhetorical appeals.

Based on the research topicality, the following question is attention in the rhetoric and prosody of the judicial discourse in mass media. What does the rhetoric prosody language tell about the methods the mass media use to reach the masses announcing different court cases? The following hypothesis capitalizes on the must-consider idea, which reveals the essential facts about the rhetoric in mass media and rhetoric prosody in news coverings:

Journalists use the rhetoric methods of 'appeal to emotions', 'stating facts', or 'consider values' to deliver the legal practice to masses, and announcers and correspondents stress words or syllables to reinforce a message or suggest doubt or uncertainty in TV news coverings.

The rhetoric and prosody research covered the following steps containing two analyses:

(1) Judicial discourse analysis based on the rhetorical principles;

(2) Acoustic-phonetic analysis for an overview of the F_0 peaks and valleys, prominence, syllable segmentation.

Literature review

There are very few studies dedicated to the rhetoric and prosody of the judicial discourse, mainly works are dedicated to political speeches. Corbett, E. considers the traditional part of the legal discourse happening in the courtroom covering the research questions of the rhetoric speech, whereas, Touati, P. (1993) gives a survey of studies of the rhetoric prosody in French politics. The research covers the prosodic features of the political debate and the listener's conception and interpretation. While the issue of the news coverings prosody is approached by Strangert, E. (2005), who considers the prosody in a public speech by a professional announcer. Kim, I., Mathon, C. & Boulakia, G. demonstrate the role of the rhetorical prosody in the French courtroom discourse. Roach, P.(2009), Gussenhoven, C.(2002), Hirschberg, J.(2002), Wichmann, A.(2002), Scherer, K., R. (2003), address to the prosodic features perceived and interpreted by the listener. Among the domestic scientist, we would like to mention Urmanova L.(2014), who covers the prosody of the media discourse, Musayeva, E.(2010) who studies the intonation of the political discourse, and Satybaldinova, M.(2011) who covers the intonation in the aesthetic, musical and rhetorical sense. The research towards the judicial discourse, especially, judicial document analysis is presented in the works of Kaldybekova, N.(2020), while Ratbekova, A. (2020) considers the linguistic properties of the criminology texts. Ratbekova, A. (2020) states that media sometimes disseminate untrue and defamatory information, in other cases, journalists are falsely accused. In the paper, she covered language conflicts as part of linguistics and criminology. Noruzova, G. (2016) focuses on the legal media discourse as a contemporary and complex communicative phenomenon bounded together through the institutional types of discourses – the legal and the media discourses.

Results and discussion

First and foremost, we would prefer to appeal to the definition of the word "rhetoric" which can be considered as the speech act of persuasion. Stevenson describes rhetoric as the faculty of discovering all the available means of persuasion in any given situation. Corbett, E. (1965) considers the traditional part of the legal discourse in terms of the rhetoric speech. Corbett, E. (1965:23) presents the rhetorical discourse principles that include rational appeal (logos), emotional appeal (pathos), and ethical appeal (ethos). In further paragraphs, we use the terms 'logos', 'pathos', and 'ethos', which are Greek lexicons, dating back to Aristotle. Melanie Gagich & Emilie Zickel (2017) presented techniques of three appeals that were used to consider the narration style.

(1) Pathos is an appeal to emotions that can be seen in the speech of correspondents while the first testimony took place. While the testimony, the attorney and prosecutor asked questions related to the case, and during the break time, the correspondents had time to discuss the process of the case on the live channel on Court TV. The correspondents tried to evoke a personal response from the audience stating she was connected to the jury and believable due to her story-match-up of the case. The following extract can serve as an example:

01:15:30,789 - 01:16:03,250

"I think she's connected to the jury very well. She's very believable I don't know if we could say likable but her story seems to match up to this point like you said we haven't gotten to the meat of what we're trying to find sin, or the defense counsel has set a foundation to like her going for you setting her up for what we know will be a tough cross-examination Chantal believable or what's your take on her so far she does she comes across as very matter-of-fact very this is what happened"

(2) Logos is appeals to logic, rationality, and reality.

Since the first trial, there was much evidence towards the intentional murder of her ex-boyfriend posted and published in different newspapers and online posts. As Berger (2009: 263) states 'Narrative [is] essential, and unavoidable, for persuasion and understanding'. That is, narrating and persuading the situation in another light of the case; people started accusing the girl of being a cold-blooded murderer that proves the multiple comments under the live video recording of the case posted on YouTube channel Court TV.

Meanwhile, Corbett (1965:409) narrates that 'the kind of diction that a writer habitually uses can tell us a great deal about the quality of his mind and the quality of his style. We made the point earlier that a writer must be in command of several styles so that he can accommodate his manner to various subject matters, occasions, purposes, and audiences. Thus, the argumentation in other news coverings and newspapers is contradictory to the statements shown in the first trial live video, where correspondents stated that she was believable, but the prosecutor's accusation of Ezra turned the situation to another direction that can be seen in the following extract:

"A jury returned a guilty verdict Friday for a western Wisconsin woman who stabbed her ex-boyfriend 16 times and then, prosecutors said, concocted a phony story of self-defense that included carving the word "boy" in her arm."

Based on the article 'Menomonie woman convicted of killing ex-boyfriend, carving 'boy' in her arm' posted on Twin Cities Pioneer Press **on** November 2, 2019, showed that her narration of the story did not match the facts. Moreover, cause/ effect thinking and exemplification mode of thinking took place in news coverings lasting from 2-3 minutes. We considered four different news coverings broadcasted on WQOW news 18, CBS morning and CBS news channels. They announced the verdict narrating the case with more evidence from that day. The argumentation-narration showed the intention of presenting her as a cool-blooded murderer than the innocent person that killed for self-defense.

(3) Ethos is appealing to the values and authorial credibility and character. The rhetorical principle of ethos can be seen in the credibility of the evidence and the decision of the Judge, who sentenced her to life imprisonment.

Considering these rhetoric principles, identifying the prosodic units in terms of the orthographic representation is required. Malphurs, R. (2013:36) states that without becoming familiar with contextual cues, such as tone and voice intonation, researchers could easily overlook sarcastic or ironic statements in transcripts, coding them as a genuine statement. Temporal variables of the speech, i.e. speech and articulation rates, duration, and pauses, permit analyzing the court decisions announced in mass media; furthermore, they allow ascertaining the speaker's intention to highlight the judicial decision positively or negatively.

To consider the rhetoric and prosody of the case covered in mass media, we employed phonetic segmentation, melodic stylisation, and prominence detection analysis using the program Praat. As a sample served the news covering from CBS Mornings channel with the title 'Woman claims she stabbed ex-boyfriend 16 times in self-defense' that was aired before the court's decision.

The sample was converted to audio material to analyze it in the software program Praat. The total duration of the sample is 222,034979 seconds containing 459 words.

The text of the audio material was transcribed using the online software program, but, unfortunately program has difficulties in transcribing words with non-verbal features like background noise and recorded speech. Compared to the announcer's speech, which is recorded in the studio, the correspondent's part has more non-verbal features like sounds, background music, Ezra's cry, and walking in high hill shoes.

Roach, P. (2009:73) signifies that the quintessential characteristic of the stressed syllable is prominence. Gussenhoven, C., & Jacobs, H. (2011:32) also state that a stressed syllable appears in any words as more prominent than other syllables in the same word. Thus, the same word and syllable length, stress, intensity, and pitch can vary based on the speaker's intention to reinforce a message. In this case, we tried to list words and syllables, which were accentuated by the announcer and correspondent. For prominence detection, we considered the following analyses:

- 1. Loudness equal to intensity (Hz)
- 2. Length equal to vowel duration (seconds)
- 3. Pitch equal to Fundamental Frequency (F_{α})

The first step to analyze the sample was to upload the data and start analyzing each sentence. Due to the rhetoric and prosody analyses, we considered parts with stressed words. The word or syllable can be considered stressed if it is longer, louder, and shows F_0 pitch than in other situations.

The announcer's silence-to-speech ratio was the same as for professional reading, except the time of the switch from the announcer to the correspondent. There were several pauses lasting on average 330ms for taking a breath or emphasizing the process of the case while announcement. Interview during the case investigation contained non-verbal features as crying, pauses for changing the scenes (816ms,462ms,524ms,924ms, 844ms, 1362ms,2900ms; total 7seconds 832 ms), and laughing (while four correspondents were discussing the case at the end of the news)

In the first example, the announcer starts the news announcing the case of Ezra McCandless (Fig. 1). The first introduction to the case shows the typical phrasing in the news coverings, he emphasized the name of the 'defendant' raising the pitch and intonation that fall to the words 'of murdering', 'exboyfriend', and 'Ezra' in the following example.

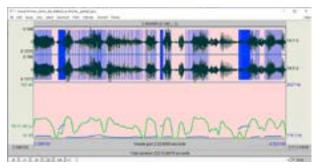


Figure 1 – Selection #1

Selection 1: of murdering(814 ms) her exboyfriend (897 ms).

The highest F_o (649.905224Hz) shows the preposition 'of', which is followed by the verb 'murdering'. The syllable durations revealed that in terms to emphasize the type of the criminal offense and the location, the announcer keeps the intention through the speech, but it falls at the end of the sentence.

Furthermore, the highest amplitude and intensity of this news covering show the following parts of the speech, which can serve as an example for emphasizing her guiltiness for taking someone's life:

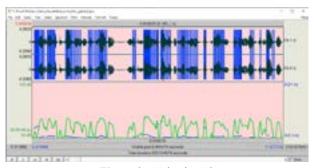
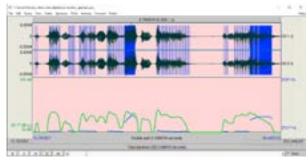


Figure 2 – Selection #2

Selection 2: Ezra McCandless admits she killed Alex Woodworth but claims it was self-defense. The verbs: 'admits' lasts 643ms, 'killed' – 533ms, 'self-defense' – 0,954s (accentuated defense-576ms) which show that the stress lasts for a while and the announcer emphasizes the verb, then takes a pause. The highest F_0 takes the name of the victim 'Alex'(807.8Hz).



Prosecutors say that story is a lie. Figure 3 – Selection # 3

Selection 3: ... prosecutors say that story (350ms) is a lie.

The announcer pauses to build emotion indicating the word 'a lie' at the end of the sentence. The stress in sentences usually falls, however in this case the sentence stress rises at the end to sustain the idea. 'A lie' shows the maximum pitch in this sentence -780.0742951649079 Hz. A pause before uttering the following statement of the prosecutor, the announcer is bound to emphasize, further slowing down and rising the pitch and intensity serve as the informative pathos, emotionally intensifying the situation and the morality.

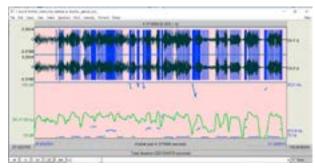


Figure 4 – Selection #4

Selection 4: I have a ... lady that just came to my house and somebody attacked her.

The news covering contained the testimony of people in order to solve and present the case from different angles; prosecutors, the attorney and the witnesses. The interviewee emphasized the phases 'just came' (2512Hz), 'and', the pitch falls and rises based on his speech intonation. In this sample, the interviewee showed more stressed words, but with a small length of words. We could observe more F_o pitched words rather than in the speech of the announcers and correspondents. The interviewee is not a professional announcer, however, the speaker most logically performed such changes to stress and emphasize significant speech portions.

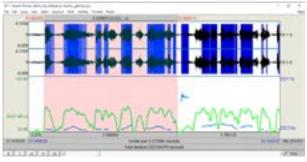


Figure 5 – Selection #5

Selection #5: *A bruised and distraught stranger* showed up on the doorstep of a Wisconsin dairy(2265Hz) farmer.

The audio has a non-verbal feature as the wind behind that also featured in this spectrogram. The correspondent took a pause between 'a' and 'bruised' (465ms) accentuating the appearance and condition of the defendant to build a drama. A break before the critical word slows down while describing the appearance and later in the news accentuating that this performance was just acting staged situation of the defendant shows the 'pathos' and 'logos' in further description.

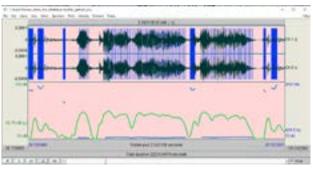


Figure 6 – Selection #6

Selection #6: Her(1673Hz) clothes were all torn(2209).

The beginning and end of this evidence by the witness had the exceptional sound heightening the perception of the audience. The witness emphasizes the word 'torn', pronouncing it with a high peak, while the utterance kept intense till the end of the speech.

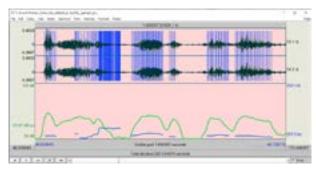
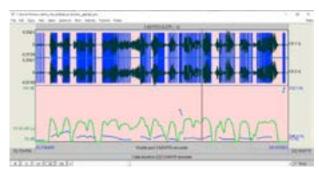


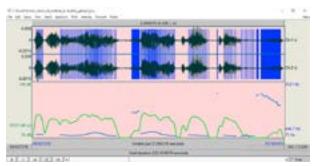
Figure 7 – Selection 7

Selection#7: ...as she pleaded(535Hz) for help.

The correspondent changed her speech intonation and intension between slower to faster. In this selection, the verb 'pleaded' was lengthened (659ms) and the pitch kept high, followed by the phrase 'for help'. The correspondent



Ezra told the authority that she didn't recall(1481Hz) much about attack(2476Hz). Figure 8 – Selection 8



But she knew who (1238Hz) attacked her. Figure 9 – Selection 9

The minimum pitch in this selection shows 93.95 Hz, while the maximum pitch is 2476.75 – that 96% of pitch increase. The correspondent emphasizes the moment of the 'attack' and 'who' from the words of the 'defendant', while the speech continues with the phrase 'a man (635ms) Alex Woodworth', each phrase has a pause in pronouncing that the words are standing separate and emphasized. In further, giving the characteristics to the 'defendant' and 'the victim', the correspondent accentuated the following words: aspiring (779ms) artist (2542Hz), own car(2121Hz, 536ms) as a canvas (1205ms) followed by a short pause.

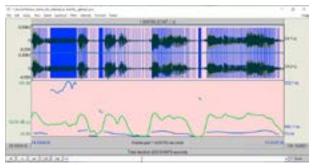


Figure 10 – Selection 10

Introducing their background, the correspondent emphasizes 'the secret(2488Hz, 498ms) affair for a month' that also proves the 'logos' and rhetoric prosody used to emphasize the facts and evidence. Highlighting the exact word, she gives the exact essence to the audience.

The news coverage contains special effects of using the interviews given by witnesses, an attorney, and others. While the 'Something horrible happens to this woman' and long pause (844ms) to change to the evidence. The part of the sentence 'police had a big problem' has paused on average 120ms that is shown in Fig.11.

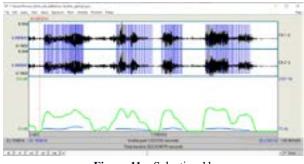


Figure 11 – Selection 11

Then, she continuous the unrevealing of the evidence related to the process of the case, taking a breath (408ms). The 'logos' portrayed in prosody increases the perception and interpretation of the moment by the audience. 'They could(1832Hz) not find the crime(1185Hz) scene or Alex (2348Hz)' and etc. The correspondent portrayed the situation and the crime scene with high intensity what we can expect from a professional correspondent.

The same intensity is shown in the speech of the attorney in Fig.12 when she takes a pause to continue the process stating 'Everything changed (436ms) when'. Attorney makes an accent in the situation that changed after revealing the truth.

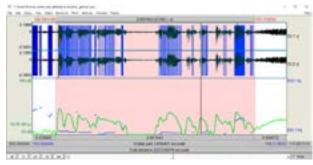
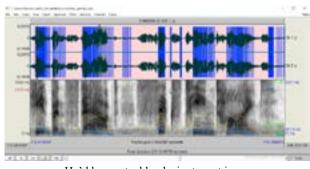


Figure 12 – Attorney's speech selection

The spectrogram shows that the correspondent emphasizes '16 times', which lasts 1.7 seconds out of 2.97 seconds of the sentence shown in Fig. 13. The correspondent uses the extreme use of the prosody lengthening the number of stabbing the man by a 'defendant'.



He'd been s t a bb ed s i x t een t ime s Figure 13 – Selection# 13

Turn-taking of the describing the process with the interview of the attorney, the news coverage focuses on putting extra weight to the 'emotional' and 'evidence effect. The role of the rhetoric prosody of lengthening and pronouncing word expanding the Fo or sometimes compressing it, news coverage focused on the crime details, giving the effect of reinforcing the message the audience should perceive emotionally.

Conclusion

These findings shed a light on how the rhetoric and prosody can be optimally used to announce and describe the process of the crime. The correspondents and announcers stress the words that can shape the idea of what is happening. The prosody of lengthening and accentuating 'verbs' and 'nouns' to represent the facts about the stage of crime refers to the capability to attract the interest of the masses increasing the intensity of the case. Thus, the evidence and stage scene are presented using the judicial discourse lexicons, while narrating the story, they used emotionally-covered vocabulary as 'bask in the limelight', 'put on the show', 'meek timid', 'boiled down', 'was she going to play?', 'on stand'.

The judicial discourse in mass media is mostly based on the narrative strategy while the trial goes on. Based on the selection, the news professionals use the alternates between the intensity, rise, and fall of the pitch to accentuate the moments, lengthen or shorten, use pauses to present the evidence and facts.

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Data Collection

Wisconsin woman guilty of stabbing lover to death sentenced, posted at 8:30 AM, February 10, 2020 and last updated 9:06 AM, February 10, 2020

Menomonie woman convicted of killing ex-boyfriend, carving 'boy' in her arm, Twin Cities Pioneer Press, published: November 2, 2019 at 9:51 a.m. | UPDATED: February 8, 2020 at 11:17 a.m.

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WQOW News 18: Ezra McCandless sentenced in Dunn County Court. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NqKmgUtmFmw Court TV: Killer Girlfriend Murder Trial. Ezra McCandless Testimony Pt. 1 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4pkGvSsHZw8

CBS Mornings: Woman claims she stabbed ex-boyfriend 16 times in self-defense. https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=mwh6f8UzV8M

CBS News: Sentencing for Wisconsin woman who admitted to stabbing ex-boyfriend to death begins today. https://www.you-tube.com/watch?v=fotq6YC4Tvs