

## Week 10

Next:

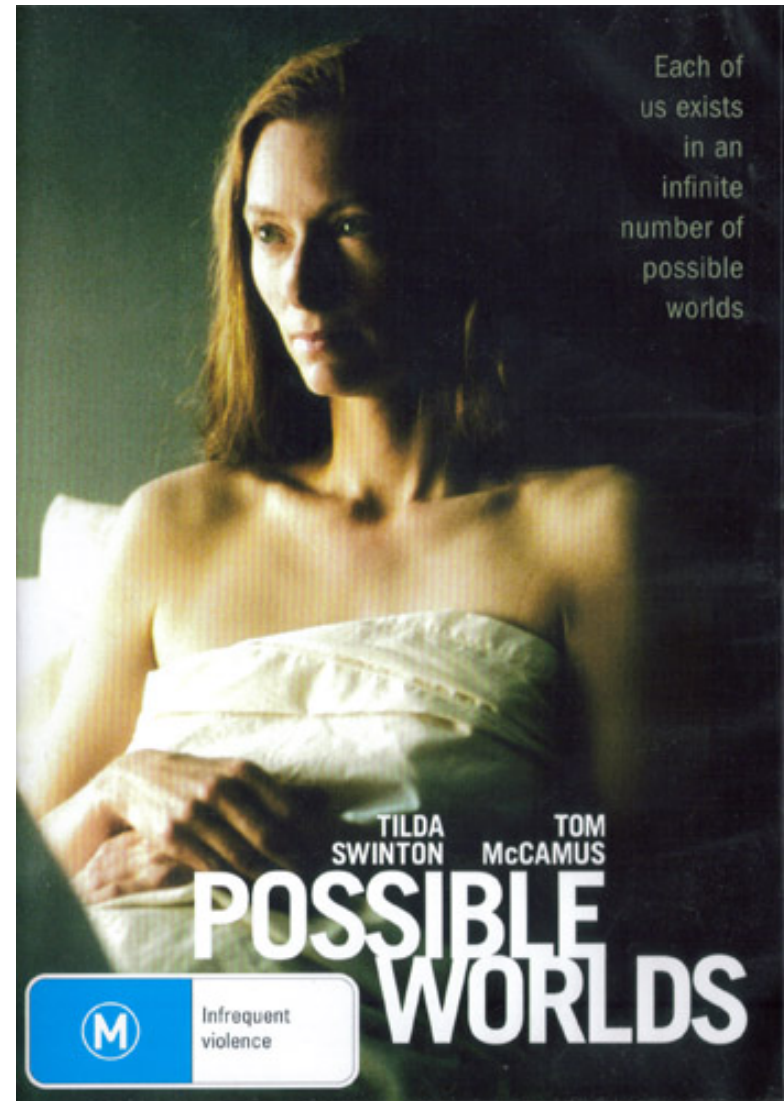
- Displacement: Worlds, then times
  - Reading for this week: von Stechow and Heim 2021 pp. 3–18; 21–37  
(Reading for the rest of the module online)
- Then a bit of formal pragmatics: the relationship of utterances to discourse

## Displacement

“Man is apparently almost unique in being able to talk about things that are remote in space or time (or both) from where the talking goes on. This feature — ‘displacement’ — seems to be definitely lacking in the vocal signaling of man’s closest relatives, though it does occur in bee-dancing.”

Charles Hockett (1960: 90)

One way that language manifests “displacement” is by discussing other *possible worlds*:



(60% on Rotten Tomatoes)

Modals are expressions that *quantify over (some) possible worlds*.

(1) **Modal bases = worlds to quantify over, a partial list:**

- Epistemic: worlds compatible with our knowledge
- Deontic: worlds that are compatible with laws and regulations
- "Root": worlds compatible with the individuals' abilities

(2) **Modal force = the quantifier:**

- possibility: existential  $\exists$  (traditionally  $\diamond$ )
- necessity: universal  $\forall$  (traditionally  $\square$ )

**Exercise:** Classify modals in terms of their modal base and force.

**Epistemic**

**Deontic**

**“Root”**

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**Possibility:**

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**Necessity:**

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- (3) We can't see outside. It **might** be raining right now.
- (4) John lives alone and I see that the lights are on in his house. John **must** be home.
- (5) In America, you **can** chew gum wherever you want.
- (6) You **must** drive on the left in Singapore.
- (7) David says he's never met Jesse but I saw their picture together! He **has to** be lying!
- (8) You **should** do the readings for class.
- (9) I just heard something. **Maybe** there's a bird in that tree.
- (10) John lives with roommates and I see that their lights are on. John **may** be home.
- (11) Because penguins are birds, some people think they **can** fly.
- (12) On a clear day, you **can** see Bukit Timah from the top floor.
- (13) Because you were sick, you **are allowed** to submit the pset late.
- (14) Everyone **needs** to come to class on time.