



# Syllabus of Errors: Poems (Princeton Series of Contemporary Poets)

*Troy Jollimore*

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*... we are fixed to perpetrate the species—*

*I meant perpetuate—as if our duty?*

*were coupled with our terror. As if beauty*

*itself were but a syllabus of errors.*

Troy Jollimore's first collection of poems won the National Book Critics Circle Award, was hailed by the *New York Times* as "a snappy, entertaining book," and led the *San Francisco Chronicle* to call him "a new and exciting voice in American poetry." And his critically acclaimed second collection expanded his reputation for poems that often take a playful approach to philosophical issues. While the poems in *Syllabus of Errors* share recognizable concerns with those of Jollimore's first two books, readers will also find a voice that has grown more urgent, more vulnerable, and more sensitive to both the inevitability of tragedy and the possibility of renewal.

Poems such as "Ache and Echo," "The Black-Capped Chickadees of Martha's Vineyard," and "When You Lift the Avocado to Your Mouth" explore loss, regret, and the nature of beauty, while the culminating long poem, "Vertigo," is an elegy for a lost friend as well as a fantasia on death, repetition, and transcendence (not to mention the poet's favorite Hitchcock film). Ingeniously organized into sections that act as reflections on six quotations about birdsong, these poems are themselves an answer to the question the poet asks in "On Birdsong": "What would we say to the cardinal or jay, / given wings that could mimic their velocities?"

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