

The Carolines of This World

If you get out at all
you're sure to meet
the Carolines of this world,

so certain that their job's the right job,
their choice of arrival time
and airplane seat the best.

Anxiousness and ruffleability
are as alien to them as waking
eager to greet the day is to you.

It takes people like this
to make you feel
a paradoxical bit of affection

for your hand-wringing
approach to things,
and they sense this

and it makes them more smug
and you more tentative,
but you wouldn't trade your way for theirs.

It's not their confidence,
which you admire and envy
and congratulate yourself

on exhibiting on your best day,
but the absence
of any fissure of doubt

such as we all need lest we fail
to perceive our failures amid all
our propounding of our success.

Caroline, as you were lecturing
and I was nodding,
you needed to notice

that I was not wanting
to be you. For me
to want that, the door

to self-consciousness
would have to have opened
to let me out and you in.