On Flunking a Nice Boy Out of School

I wish I could teach you how ugly
decency and humility can be when they are not
the election of a contained mind but only
the defenses of an incompetent. Were you taught
meekness as a weapon? Or did you discover,
by chance maybe, that it worked on mother
and was a good thing—at least when all else failed—to get you over the worst of what
was coming.
Is that why you bring these sheepfaces to Tuesday?

They won't do.
It's three months work I want, and I'd sooner have it
from the brassiest lumpkin in pimpedom, but have it,
than all these martyred repentances from you.

—John Ciardi, 1916-1986