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For the fiftieth reunion of my Pomona class of 1957 in 2007, I recited a ditty at our dinner. It recalls the orange groves that surrounded the college when we entered as fresh-persons in 1953.

There once was a goddess, Pomona,
Who possessed a mysterious smile,
Like Lisa's, whose first name was Mona;
She seemed serene, so lacking in guile.

Her orchards of orange are gone, a
Victim of sprawl, of malls by the mile.
The college stands, named for Pomona,
Still fruitful, true to her, all the while.

Rather than say something inspiring or give unwanted advice to those who graduate today and are the primary honorees of this occasion, I'd like to read some Elizabethan poetry about the goddess Pomona. It is from an English translation of Ovid's *Metamorphosis* by Arthur Golding, first published in 1567, a book that had a tremendous influence on William Shakespeare and was called by Ezra Pound "the most beautiful book in the language" in his *ABC of Reading*.

This is from the story of Pomona and Vertumnus. Pomona is a wood nymph who, as goddess of fruit trees and orchards, has no time for romance while she gardens. But Vertumnus, a Roman fruit deity, courts her by assuming the form of an old woman and telling her the dreadful story of low-born Iphis who falls in love with Lady Anaxarete who rebuffs him. He commits suicide and she is turned to stone. Then, when Vertumnus resumes his manly shape, Pomona is overcome and yields to him. The message is: be soft-hearted in life.

In this king's reign Pomona lived. There was not to be found
Among the wood nymphs anyone in all the Latian ground
That was so cunning for to keep an orchard as was she,
And none so painful to preserve the fruit of every tree.

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This was her love and whole delight. And as for Venus' deeds
She had no mind at all of them. And forbecause she dreads
Enforcement by the country folk, she walled her yards about,
Not suffering any man at all to enter in or out.
[*Vertumnus changes his sex to approach Pomona.*]
And finally in many shapes he sought to find access
To joy the beauty but by sight, that did his heart oppress.
Moreover, putting on his head a woman's wimple gay,
And staying by a staff, gray hairs he forth to sight did lay
Upon his forehead, and did feign a beldame for to be.
By means whereof he came within her godly orchards free:
And wondering at the fruit, said: Much more skill hast thou I see

Than all the nymphs of Albula. Hail lady mine, the flower
Unspotted of pure maidenhood in all the world this hour.
And with that word he kissed her a little: but his kiss
Was such as true old women would have never given iwis.
[*After telling Pomona the cautionary tale, Vertumnus reverts to male.*]
The God that can upon him take what kind of shape he list
Now having said this much in vain, omitted to persist
In beldame's shape, and showed himself a lusty gentleman,
Appearing to her cheerfully, e'en like as Phoebus when
He having overcome the clouds that did withstand his might,
Doth blaze his brightsome beams again with fuller heat and light.
He offered force, but now no force was needful in the case.
For why she being caught in love with beauty of his face,
Was wounded then as well as he, and gan to yield apace.