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**Allusion as First-fruits in Tibullus I.1**

Commentators have long remarked the numerous Virgilian allusions in the first half of Tibullus I.1. In this paper I argue, in conjunction with a survey of the relevant allusions, that Tibullus invites the reader to compare his use of allusion in I.1 to the practice of offering first-fruits or libation, a widespread religious practice of thanksgiving for agricultural bounty that was a common trope in Roman praise of the countryside. By figuring allusion as an offering of first-fruits Tibullus suggests a picture of literary interaction that pays homage to his predecessor and at the same time emphasizes his own poetic authority. As the farmer gives back a part of his harvest in recognition of the beneficent conditions under which he was able to cultivate his small plot of land, so Tibullus ‘gives back’ to Virgil by way of literary reference, in thanks for the rich literary environment, supplied by the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*, in which he was able to compose his own small book of poems. Take, for example, the following pair of couplets:

Et quodcumque mihi pomum novus educat annus,

Libatum agricolae ponitur ante deo.

**Flava Ceres**, tibi fit nostro de rura corona

**Spicea**, quae templi pendeat ante fores; (I.1.13-16)

And compare the following two verses from *Georgics* I:

**Flava Ceres** alto nequiquam spectat Olympo (*Geo.* 1.96)

**Spicea** iam campis cum messis inhorruit et cum (*Geo.* 1.314)

At I.1.15-16 Tibullus enacts something very similar to the agricultural libation he describes in the preceding couplet: by positioning *Flava Ceres* and *Spicea* in initial position, the poet offers back to Virgil these initial samplings, these verse-initiating fragments, of his own poem. The initiatory status of the allusions is further enhanced by the fact that it is in the *Georgics* that both *Flava Ceres* (as a noun-adjective combination) and *Spicea* make their first appearances in the corpus of Latin literature. This marked confluence of ‘firsts’—initial position of *Flava Ceres* and *Spicea* in their respective verses (both in Virgil and Tibullus’ echoes), as well as the first uses of the phrases, in the *Georgics*—sets off an extended description of agricultural libation which alludes repeatedly to Virgil’s work. In this association of allusion with the offering of first-fruits, Tibullus presents an image of poetic production in Augustan Rome that emphasizes the importance of both reflexivity and intertextuality.