Harmodius killed Hipparchus, but was slain on the spot himself. Aristogeiton, having had no time even to strike at Hippias, was arrested, tortured and put to death.

The tyranny became much harsher after the murder. Opposition to the tyrant Hippias persisted. Members of a prominent Athenian family (the Alcmaeonids) tried to fortify a base from which to attack the tyrant. Failing in this attempt, they changed their strategy. While at Delphi on a contract to help rebuild the oracle and temple of Apollo, this family bribed the Delphic prophetess to advise Sparta to liberate Athens from the tyrants. From then on, in answer to routine queries the oracle repeatedly admonished the Spartans to “free Athens first.” In 510, four years after the murder of Hipparchus, Sparta intervened militarily and Hippias was deposed. A rivalry for power in Athens ensued between two elite politicians, Cleisthenes and Isagoras. Cleisthenes gained the upper hand by allying himself with the common people. Isagoras persuaded King Cleomenes of Sparta to intervene in support of his faltering aristocratic faction. Cleisthenes, who was also a member of the Alcmaeonid family, fled the city. But even with Cleisthenes out of the city, Isagoras’ faction met with popular resistance, which forced Isagoras and King Cleomenes to withdraw to the Acropolis, where an angry mass of people besieged them. A truce was arranged and the two men were expelled from the city; Cleisthenes was recalled to Athens, and soon after set in motion his famous, extensive reforms, which scholars today generally consider the beginning of democracy at Athens.

In the years following these events as well as throughout the fourth century, however, the idea of the tyrant slayers as founders of democracy captured imaginations. Very soon after the expulsion of Hippias, possibly as early as 509, the sculptor Antenor made a group statue of Harmodius and Aristogeiton that was placed in the central market (agora), a space that grew in size and significance with the development of democracy. This was the first political monument in Greek history. The Tyrannicides are the first historical figures so honored, and remained the only such figures for over 100 years. The particular importance of the statues as symbols of Athenian freedom is attested by the fact that the Persian King Xerxes ordered them removed during his brief occupation of Athens in 480. They were quickly replaced by a new statuary group by leading artists, the sculptors Kritios and Nesiotes (Fig. 17). The new group was set up in the marketplace following the defeat of the Persians at the battle of Salamis. The verse attributed to Simonides inscribed on the base of the rededicated statue group reads: “A great light came to the Athenians, when Aristogeiton and Harmodius killed Hippiarchus” (Hephaestion 28, translation adapted from Bowra 1961: 321). After the rededication of the new, more impressive statue grouping, Harmodius and Aristogeiton were officially venerated and soon represented on vases and coins. They were also honored by a public tomb and the establishment of a hero cult that included an annual pub-
lic sacrifice conducted by the chief magistrate overseeing military affairs, the Polemarch. In the 440s or 430s (the period of Pericles' prominence), the Assembly by specific act gave those who claimed to be descendants of the Tyrannicides the right to take meals at public expense in the Prytaneum.

It is impossible to say whether a significant number of Athenians from various walks of life objected to the new and persistent symbolism. It is plausible that the original celebration of the Tyrannicides played a part in the articulation of aristocratic rivalries in Athens, as some scholars have insisted, though our sources do not permit us to settle this question. On the whole, scholarly efforts to fix the partisan origins of the cult of the Tyrannicides miss

Figure 17
the great political significance of the myth. What is stunning and in need of explanation is that the legend became so quickly and widely embraced among Athenians as an enduring symbol not of aristocratic ideals or partisan divisions, but of common aspirations. How did celebration of these two heroes, and not simply the experience of celebration, somehow “specif[y] the values by which the new collectivity aspired to be known”? (Wolin 1989: 9). Why did the Athenians adopt this tale? More precisely, why did it rapidly become the “official” popularly accepted version and remain so for generations?

A number of factors combined to make the tale particularly attractive to various classes of people. To begin, the tale named the enemy that the diverse Athenian community was undivided in opposing—tyranny. In this way it facilitated the city’s efforts to imagine itself a unity. Harmodius and Aristogeiton as a pair were well-suited to the representation of the pervasive sentiment of anti-tyranny. They had done something dramatic against a tyrant. Many Athenians could easily have found expressed in their act the ideal of passionate resistance to tyrannical overreaching that was itself nicely symbolized by Hipparchus’ interference in the erotic relation between Harmodius and Aristogeiton. Also, the two men were well suited for uninhibited admiration. Venerating Harmodius and Aristogeiton was safe: they were dead. They could not later use their growing status and reputation as a springboard to power, possibly even extralegal power and the return of tyranny. Harmodius and Aristogeiton were also not remembered as politically ambitious men, nor as skillful pursuers of a political plan.

Attributing the liberation of Athens to the Tyrannicides supported Athenian solidarity by making the founding of democracy a purely Athenian event. At the very least, it placed at the start of a series of events a daring act by Athenians unassisted by outsiders. The focus on Harmodius and Aristogeiton concealed the part Spartan military intervention played in the expulsion of the tyrant, particularly embarrassing to Athenian self-definition after Sparta became Athens’ major rival in the decades after the Persian War. A dramatic act by a pair of Athenians captured imaginations more easily than could the Spartan army or intrigue at Delphi.

The tale also helpfully nurtured a forgetting of the severe civil strife that marked the early Cleisthenic period. The tension between the (defeated) aristocratic faction and the (victorious) democratic faction led by Cleisthenes must have been intense in this period. The aristocratic faction had recently committed acts that democrats would have found thoroughly offensive: they had enlisted the help of a foreign power to gain control over the majority (Isagoras had called on the aid of Cleomenes of Sparta). The people, in turn, had recently committed acts that the conservative aristocrats would have found terrifying. In particular, they had mobilized their numbers against a hated individual (a “mob” had taken action against Isagoras). Untainted by any strong partisan association rooted in these conflicts, Harmodius and Aristogeiton could
provide a rallying call in support of the Cleisthenic reforms that could appeal over the heads of other allegiances. The group statue commemorating the tyrannicide by Kritios and Nesioites is telling in this connection (Fig. 17). It visually represents the achievement of solidarity. It engages the viewer in imaging the strength that comes from uniting youthful vigor and boldness with mature, considerate determination. The contrasting individual features of the two men are carefully rendered as are differences of character. Aristogeiton appears steady and older, positioned slightly behind Harmodius; Harmodius appears young, daring and eager. Yet their postures are similar and the composition employs a large number of parallel axes giving the impression that their movements are choreographed; they are depicted acting in concert, as a unity (Fehr 1984: 34-41).

But the tale elicited potentially divisive emotions as well, and in doing so allowed citizens of different classes to find themselves represented in this symbol of post-tyrannical Athenian political life. For example, aristocrats could find in the tale a celebration of the special contribution of the nobly born to the excellence of the newly restructured Athenian polis. The appeal of the tyrannicide story to the common citizens, on the other hand, could lie in its celebration of an act of supreme boldness, that is, an act that could have recalled for them the daring they themselves had exhibited in the popular uprising against Isagoras. This combination of meanings is present in the cult statue of the Tyrannicides. The confident pose of the figures likely evoked a variety of responses that could have allowed citizens with different partisan convictions to find something in the new political project with which to affiliate. The figures "stride forward boldly" (Castriota 1998: 203). Every gesture suggests self-possession. The facial expressions connote nobility and dedication. The statue suggests the excellence to which citizens aspired. But it does so in an inclusive, rather than exclusively aristocratic, manner, as the statue was placed in the agora and was the centerpiece of a public cult. Moreover, the people (dēmos), understood as the self-conscious collectivity that acted to oppose Isagoras, could have found in the statue a representation of its own emerging self-confidence—the pose of Harmodius is of a confident man, arm raised, ready to strike. The statue served as a visual reminder of the power of the demos to oppose overly ambitious aristocrats. Art historian Andrew Stewart finds this meaning apparent: since Harmodius "stands right in the path" of people coming into the agora, "the warning is clear: Let future tyrants beware!" (Stewart 1990: I, 136). As the statue and the legend appealed to various people in all these ways, the Tyrannicides provided a remarkably dense, multivocal symbol, that is, one capable of eliciting different, yet strong feelings from many Athenian groups, thus fostering attachments to the new political order by fostering affection for the myth. The mythic version of Athens' "founding," reiterated on a number of public and private ritual occasions, served the development of solidarity in the absence of a strong consensus. The public commemoration of the tyrannicide
and veneration of Harmodius and Aristogeiton supplied a common experience through which free citizens of various social and economic positions could develop and sustain affective ties to the idea of a unified Athenian demos.

The tyrannicide's strong association with the embrace at Athens of political equality (isonomia) is also present in two versions of an Attic drinking song that was contemporaneous with the upheavals of the Cleisthenic period and that remained popular for generations:

(1). I shall take the myrtle-branch and carry my sword, like Harmodius and Aristogeiton, when they slew the tyrant and made Athens equal.

(2). Their fame shall live on the earth for ever, dearest Harmodius and Aristogeiton, since they slew the tyrant and made Athens equal. (fr. 893 and 896 PMG, translation adapted from Bowra 1961: 392).

The line "made Athens equal" is an expression of praise. It names a good that Athens has secured, not only the accomplishment of a decisive break with tyranny (captured in the direct mention of the murder), but also the capacity of the democratic city to sustain this break over time by means of the wide distribution of power achieved by reliance on an open Assembly, free speech rights, simple majority rule to decide public policy, and lot and rotation to fill administrative posts.

The legend was also highly alluring for its capacity to work as a parable of public-private relations in the democratic city. As such it did not glorify the spirited self-sacrifice these men made for the public good, as twentieth century readers might be inclined to believe. Rather, this tale served the Athenians' celebration of their desire to sustain a vigorous relation of mutual exchange between individual citizens and the city as a whole—even their (imagined) accomplishment of the coincidence of individual citizens' personal and private interests. I add "imagined" because it is primarily at the level of the Athenian civic imaginary, or wishful self-concept, that the pair of lovers are important in Athenian politics of the classical period. The Athenians did not accomplish in fact such conflict-free relations between individuals and the city. The story of the Tyrannicides is part of the iconography of Athenian aspirations to such a state of affairs. It is some of the material they relied upon to negotiate conflicts and to sustain individuals' affective ties to their city through tumultuous times.

The story of Harmodius and Aristogeiton placed before the Athenians a model of benefaction that resolved the potential for conflict between a citizen's public and private loyalties. Neither figure in this tale is identified as having willingly neglected personal commitments or sacrificed private goods for the sake of public ones. Rather, the lovers' loyalty to each other and to the familial interest of Harmodius were all consistent with the best interest of the city, understood as liberation from the tyrant. For example, the fourth-century orator Aeschines warns the jury that his adversary will defend the improper homo-
sexual behavior of Timarchus by appealing to the example of Harmodius and Aristogeiton: "He will cite those benefactors of yours, Harmodius and Aristogeiton, describing their fidelity to one another, and telling how in their case this relationship proved the salvation of the city" (Against Timarchus 132, trans. Adam). Aeschines here assumes that the story of the pederastic lovers Harmodius and Aristogeiton typically symbolized the aspiration of citizens to a congruence of their private and public interests.

Another example of a source utilizing the common knowledge of the private motives that lay behind the public act of Harmodius and Aristogeiton is Pausanias' appeal to the memory of Harmodius and Aristogeiton in his speech in Plato's Symposium. Pausanias' speech praises an idealized pederasty in part by asserting that it supports the attainment of political excellence. To craft this argument Plato has Pausanias say:

The Persian empire is absolute; that is why it condemns love as well as philosophy and sport. It is no good for rulers if the people they rule cherish ambitions for themselves or form strong bonds of friendship with one another. That these are precisely the effects of philosophy, sport, and especially of Love is a lesson the tyrants of Athens learned directly from their own experience: Didn't their reign come to a dismal end because of the bonds uniting Harmodius and Aristogeiton in love and affection (eros and philia)? (182c, trans. Nehamas & Woodruff)

That this was a conventional attitude much earlier as well is suggested by the ease with which the statue of Harmodius and Aristogeiton that stood in the agora could convey related ideals (Fig. 17). This statue represents the erotic character of the pair's relation. The statue "acquired a sexual edge" as it presented an "aggressive display of unclothed male bodies" in "striding active poses" (Osborne 1997: 514, see also Osborne 1998). Moreover, through a complex visual code, each of the figures conveys the qualities that made up ideal attractiveness in both parties—the older erastês and youthful erômenos. The statue invites young men and boys to identify with Harmodius and mature men with Aristogeiton and then for both to "vicariously savor the homoerotic relationship between the two" (Stewart 1997: 73). But, as Stewart continues, the raised arm of Harmodius bearing a sword and the about-to-pounce posture of both figures also compel the viewer "to stand in for the doomed Hipparchus." In this way we find represented a politicization of their erotic relationship. The liberation depended on the manly virtues that the erotic bond between these men had nurtured. Only such manly men could generate confidence that "future aspirants to tyranny would meet a similar fate." The statue may even suggest that the "true guarantor" of Athenian freedom is the homoerotic bonds among citizen men and boys. Mingling citizens' private, erotic attachments with an act of tremendous civic significance, the visual representa-
tion of the myth in the Kritios group suggests not only a congruence between a citizen's personal and public responsibilities, but their mutual interdependence.

The myth also provides a referent for a particular interpretation of the most dramatic case of conflict between the interests of an individual and those of the community as a whole—that is, dying in battle. The two heroes were not, technically in any case, war dead themselves. Nevertheless, as their negotiation of the tensions between individual and public interests would lead us to expect, their association with military service was strong. Indeed, they were closely associated with the greatest of war heroes—those of the Persian Wars. Speakers addressing the Athenian demos about impending battles turned to the memory of Harmodius and Aristogeiton. They did so not simply to whip up the citizens' capacity to place a public good (military victory) before their personal interest in safety. Rather, appealing to the memory of these men assimilated the possibility of dying in battle to the individual's capacity to achieve exceptional personal glory. Invoking their memory represented the citizen, even in dying, not only as giving but also as receiving something of great value. Herodotus reports, for example, that Miltiades' exhortation to Callimachus before the battle of Marathon included a challenge to act so as to elicit a reputation for glory that would surpass even that enjoyed by Harmodius and Aristogeiton: "The future of Athens lies in your hands now, Callimachus. You can either cast us down into slavery or win us our freedom—and thereby ensure that you will be remembered as long as there are people alive on this earth, with a higher reputation even than Harmodius and Aristogeiton" (6.109.3, trans. Waterfield). Harmodius and Aristogeiton represented the Athenian idea that by perishing in battle, one not only dies honorably in defense of home and of great principles like political equality and freedom, but also collects a highly desirous prize: eternal honor and praise. Venerating the memory of Harmodius and Aristogeiton signaled the possibility of achieving even in death a coincidence of a citizen's private and public interests. In appealing to the legend, speakers resisted identifying suffering with a notion of personal sacrifice.

The centrality of the tale of the Tyrannicides in Athenian civic discourse made it a good target for intellectuals interested in challenging orthodox Athenian political ideals. Indeed both Thucydides and Aristotele criticize the Athenians' attachment to this myth as a way to show that imagining the resolution of the tension between citizens' private and public interests is far less valuable an intellectual enterprise that acknowledging the reality of this tension and arm ing individuals with some means of negotiating the conflict.

Writing at the end of the fifth century, Thucydides argues that the Athenian public's general belief in this legend is an example of their troubling eagerness to accept all traditions, hearsay and other data "without applying any critical test whatsoever," as opposed to the rigorous method of assessing evidence that he employs (1.20.1, trans. Strassler). He also claims that his mode of inquiry has enabled him to unearth new facts about the events of 514 that
undermine this historical episode's capacity to signal a happy coincidence of public and private interests of citizens. Thucydides insists on the following revision of the mythic account: the murder of Hipparhous was not even a tyrannicide because Hipparhous, not Hipparhous, was the eldest son of Peisistratus and thus the ruling tyrant in 514 (6.55.1-3, 1.20.2); the tyranny of Peisistratus and Hipparhous was quite gentle before the murder (6.54.5-6); and only after the murder of his brother did Hipparhous himself became oppressive, even murderous (6.59.2). He also bluntly reminds readers that the pair's daring act "was undertaken in consequence of a love affair" (6.54.1), emphasizing the known fact that a private motive lay behind the apparently political act. What is striking about Thucydides' revision is his insistence that the murder issued not in a grand public good, as the popular story proposed, but on the contrary in serious civic evils. Thucydides argues that the daring, personally motivated act of Harmodius and Aristogeiton harmed the city by making Hipparhous fearful and suspicious and by ushering in a period of spiraling violence.

The Athenians' embrace of the mythic account of the democracy's founding was, in Thucydides' view, a tragic error. Thereby the Athenians missed an opportunity to use knowledge of the past to aid their understanding of the present and future (1.22.4). Thucydides artfully stresses this point by placing his review of the myth as a digression in the middle of his account of an event of enormous significance in Athenian history, the ill-fated Athenian naval expedition against the cities of Sicily in 415 BCE and the disastrous decision to recall the talented general Alcibiades, based on ill-founded fears of his involvement in an oligarchical conspiracy (6.53-60). Thucydides invites the reader to imagine that had the Athenians understood their own past better, they might have been better able to manage political crises such as this one (cf. Rawlings 1981: 90-117, Connor 1984: 176-80, Appendix 6).

Thucydides explains that the Athenian people's extraordinary decision to dispatch a ship to arrest Alcibiades abroad during a campaign was motivated by the fear of a budding tyranny (Alcibiades) that they would not be able to crush on their own, if need be (6.53.3, 6.59.4-60.1). As a result, the Athenians became obsessively suspicious and eager to act on their worries by trying to arrest and imprison many, including Alcibiades. How did they come by this faulty reasoning? Thucydides argues that it derived from thinking about the example of the Tyrannicides: "The people had heard [got it on hearsay] how oppressive the tyranny of Peiistoratus and his sons had become before it ended, and further that tyranny had been put down at last, not by themselves and Harmodius, but by the Spartans, and so were always in fear and took everything suspiciously" (6.53.3). Thucydides reiterates the point at the close of the digression. With the role of Sparta in deposing Hipparhous "in their minds, and recalling everything they knew by hearsay on the subject [the brutality of the tyrants], the Athenian people grew... suspicious of the person charged in the affairs of the Mysteries [chiefly Alcibiades], and thought that all that had taken
place was part of an oligarchical and monarchical conspiracy’ (6.60.1). Instead, the Athenians accepted fabrications and stories as truth, with disastrous consequences. Citizens missed a chance to recognize the link between increased suspicion and increased oppression (between fear and violence) and missed an opportunity to learn that the reality of a sometimes tense relation between personal and public interests of citizens should guide their deliberations.

Aristotle also treats critical review of the tyrannicide myth as a mode of representing unorthodox thoughts about the relationship between public and private concerns of citizens. Aristotle makes the tyrannicide a chapter in his *Constitution of Athens*, showing how developing factional conflicts drove Athenian political development. Aristotle reworks the tyrannicide’s role in the liberation, correcting Thucydides’ account in some ways, but also preserving central features of Thucydides’ representation of the true significance of the episode in contrast to its orthodox understanding (18.1-19.2,2). These details stress the private origin of the deed and indicate that personal concerns fueled factional strife. This dynamic is clearest in Aristotle’s attention to the torture of Aristogeiton. The torture of Aristogeiton is passed over in the popular tale and Thucydides only mentions it briefly. Aristotle dwells on this issue:

> When [Aristogeiton] was unable to find relief through death, in spite of all his efforts, he declared that he would reveal the names of many more persons; and, having persuaded Hippias to give him his right hand as a pledge, he reviled him for having given his hand to the murderer of his brother. In this way he stirred Hippias to such a fit of rage that, unable to control himself, he drew his dagger and killed Aristogeiton. Following this, the tyranny became much harsher. (18.6-19.1, trans. von Fritz and Kapp)

Aristotle talks of the torture not to generate sympathy for Aristogeiton or merely to present a fuller account of the events, but to report more details to support the critical view that Aristogeiton’s personally interested behavior harmed the polis.

Athenian political writers consistently turned to the story of a pair of pederastic lovers, Harmodius and Aristogeiton, to consider and reconsider the complexities of the relationship between individuals and the community, between the private and public interests of individual members of the democratic city, and between eros and politics. Athenians typically looked to these lovers to imagine that unity and reciprocity could distinguish relations among citizens and between citizens and the city in the democratic polis. Critics of Athenian politics pointed to the same myth as an example of how Athenian public discourse encouraged citizens to cultivate a dangerous and impolitic inattention to the tensions between their private and public interests and those of their fellows.
A Medley of Greek Verse
Translated by Thomas K. Hubbard

Anacreon, fragment 359 PMG (from about 530 BCE)
I love Cleobulus,
I am mad for Cleobulus,
I gaze at Cleobulus.

Anacreon, fragment 360 PMG (from about 530 BCE)
Boy with a maiden’s glance,
I seek you out, but you hear not,
Unknowing that you are the charioteer
Of my soul.

Ibycus, fragment 287 PMG (from about 530 BCE)
Eros, melting me once more with his gaze
From under dark lids,
With all manner of charms throws me again
Into the boundless nets of the Love Goddess.
I tremble at him as he comes,
Like an old prize horse who knows the yoke
And unwilling goes into the swift chariot race
   One more time.

Ibycus, fragment 288 PMG (from about 530 BCE)
Euryalus, offspring of the blue-eyed Graces
And care of the fair-haired Seasons,
The Love Goddess and tender-eyed Seduction
Nurtured you among rosebuds.

Theognis 1255-56 (from about 550-500 BCE)
He who loves not boys and strong-hoofed horses
   And dogs, never knows joy in his heart.

Theognis 1367-68 (from about 550-500 BCE)
With a boy there must always be mutual favor. But to a woman
   No one’s a trusted mate; she always loves the one who’s there.

Theognis 1341-50 (from about 520-500 BCE)
Alas! I love a smooth-skinned boy, who to all friends
   Displays me, against my will.