C. Herakles and the Lernaean Hydra (Labour II)

Eurystheus ordered H. to slay the Hydra, a many-headed monster in the marsh of Lerna. H. may be assisted by Iolaos, who attacks the Hydra with harp/sword or burns the severed heads, so that no other heads can grow.

**LITERARY SOURCES**

The first mention of the Labour is in Hes. Theog. [113–118]. H. assisted by Iolaos and advised by Athena, slays with a sword the evil-minded Hydra, the third child of Typhon and Echidna (also Hyg. fab. 10, 3), brought up by Hera, who bore a grudge against him. The Hydra is described as: *nine-headed* (Alk. fig. 443 Voigt; Apollod. bibl. 2 [77] 5, 2; Hyg. l.c.; Suda s.v. *Yoph*; Serv. Aen. 6, 575: 5, 658); *fifty-headed* (Simonides, Page PMG fig. 569; Palaip. 38 Festa; Verg. Aen. 6, 576; Myth. Vat. II 163); *hundred-headed* (Eur. Herc. 1188; Phoen. 1135; Diod. 4, 11, 5; Verg. Aen. 7, 658; Sil. 2, 158; Sen. Herc. O. 1534–1535); *three-headed* (Serv. Aen. 6, 575); *many-headed* (Eur. Herc. 419–420, 1274; Verg. Aen. 8, 390; Q Smyrn. 6, 212; Anth. Pal. 16, 92, 2; cf. POxy 2454, 237). According to Paus. 2, 37, 4 the Hydra had originally only one head, the many-headed Hydra being the invention of the epic poet Pindar (late 7th cent. B.C.: Panyass l.c.) to make the monster appear more horrible.

«Apollodorus» gives a detailed description of the Labour (bibl. 2 [77] 80) 5, 2) following mainly Diodorus (4, 11, 5), who relates the story briefly. According to Apollodorus the Hydra’s den was on a hill by the spring Anymone in the swamp of Lerna (Paus. 2, 37, 4 under a plane tree: 5, 17, 11). From there this went into the plain to ravage the cattle and the country. H., on a chariot driven by Iolaos, came to Lerna and shooting at the Hydra forced it to emerge (Verg. Aen. 6, 803). H. cut the Hydra-heads but with no result, because where one head was cut off, two grew (Eur. Herc. 1274–1275; Nonn. Dion. 25, 198; Diod. 4, 11, 5; Palaip. 38 Festa); according to Serv. Aen. 6, 287 three heads grew (cf. Ov. her. 9, 95–96; Lucan. 4, 635; Sen. Ag. 835–836; Martialis 9, 101, 9); according to the Suda s.v. *Yoph* many heads grew. Then H. thought of sealing the wounds with fire. This was done by Iolaos (Eur. Herc. 421; Ion 194–198; Diod. 4, 11, 6; Schol. Var. Porph. 1137: Q Smyrn. 6, 215–219; Schol. Stat. Theb. 2, 377; Suda l.c.). A crab sent by Hera hindered H. by biting his leg (Panyass, Davies EGFZ 3; cf. Schol. Arat. phain. 147: Hyg. astr. 2, 23, 1; Hellan. FGIII 4 F 103). H. trod on the crab to get rid of it, and later it joined the Zodiac (Panyass l.c.; Schol. Arat. phain. 147; Ps.-Eratos. kat. 11: Hyg. astr. 2, 23, 1; Sen. Herc. O. 67). H. buried the middle immortal head under a huge stone in the road to Eelaeus. He dipped his arrows in the poisonous Hydra-gall (Soph. Trach. 714–718; Eur. Herc. 1187–1188; Diod. 4, 11, 6; Serv. Aen. 6, 287; Hyg. fab. 50, 3; Paus. 2, 37, 4). H. was wounded by the poison of Hydra and was cured in Phoenicia (∼Belos). After that he built there a town named Ake. Eurystheus, however, did not accept this task as one of the ten Labours of Herakles because he had been helped.
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