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## Alcestis in the Underworld: Poems | Nina Murray

In Greek myth, Alcestis descends to the underworld in place of her husband, a king, so that he may continue to rule the living. After she returns, she and her family live—presumably—happily ever after. But she has seen and learned things no one else knows. *Alcestis in the Underworld* articulates the poet's personal experience of civic duty: her life in Moscow as a U.S. diplomat, after growing up in then-USSR Ukraine.

"Murray's latest collection radiates a level of universal empathy and vivid experience that cements her place as masterful poet.... It's a treasure trove of erudite expressionism."

— Jordan Blum, *The Bookends Review*

### soft targets

I cannot help it:  
I picture damage  
when in crowds  
at the check-in line at the airport, say,  
a metro station during rush hour  
I project the direction of an imagined blast  
shatter the nearest glass in my mind's eye  
decompose the scene into carnage  
this is also writing: power must  
inscribe itself onto a body—  
a reporter pulls up his t-shirt  
in a cell-phone photo to show the red welt—  
a strikethrough mark—left by a whip  
wielded by someone dressed up as a Cossack  
the singe of contact  
is a Rubicon crossed  
the broken ribs register on the BBC  
the human rights report  
one welcomes touch for the memory of it  
last week a large horse gently  
worked his whiskered lips on my cheek  
we are all soft  
soft targets

(From *Alcestis in the Underworld*)

### PRAISE FOR NINA MURRAY'S MINIMIZE CONSIDERED

"These poems—this poet—bear the unmistakable stamp of the real thing." — Roy Scheele, author of *The Sledders* and *A Far Allegiance*

"Reading Nina Murray's work is, in some ineffable way, like turning the pages of your own life. Beautiful writing, a singular book of poems, rendered in precise, crisp language yet, marvelously, managing to produce a powerful visceral, vivid, heart-bound, near-inarticulable impression." — Mikhail Iossel, author of *Every Hunter Wants to Know* and contributing writer *New Yorker*

### ABOUT NINA MURRAY

Nina Murray is author of *Minimize Considered*, a chapbook, and her poetry has appeared in numerous journals, including *Ekphrasis* and *The Harpoon Review*. Her translations from Russian and Ukrainian include Peter Aleshkovsky's *Stargorod*, and Oksana Zabuzhko's award-winning *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets*. She grew up in Lviv, in Western Ukraine, and holds advanced degrees in linguistics and creative writing. As a member of the U.S. diplomatic corps, she has served in Lithuania, Canada, and Russia.