



TIME TO EAT LOBSTER Contemporary Korean Stories on Memories of the Vietnam War

BANG HYEON-SEOK

Translated by Seung-Hee Jeon
Afterword by Lee Kyung-jae

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In his novellas *Time to Eat Lobster* and *Forms of Being* and the short story “Rice and Soup,” Bang Hyeon-seok narrates the experiences of post-Cold War South Koreans and Vietnamese coming to terms with their own recent traumatic pasts at the same time as they form unusual bonds of love, friendship, and understanding.

In this collection by a major contemporary South Korean novelist, we are able to catch a rare glimpse of the recent historical evolution of inter-Asian relationships in the capitalist U.S.-led post-World War II world order through the characters’ enduring dreams and triumphs over their individual pain and frustration.

“In Bang Hyeon-seok’s Forms of Being and Time to Eat Lobster, there are Koreans who neither impose their own ideals on the Vietnamese nor detach themselves from them or exclude them from their lives. Koreans in his works find the values, which they had in the past but lost along the way, in Vietnam. This reality makes Vietnam a meaningful standard for contemporary Korean lives, as Koreans can acknowledge uniquely Vietnamese qualities while maintaining their own Korean identities, as shown in the translation scene in Forms of Being. This attitude is the kind of ethical ideal that Bang Hyeon-seok, who has always written for the underprivileged and marginalized since the 1980s, finds in our contemporary age of multiculturalism.”

—From the Afterword by Lee Kyung-jae

Seung-Hee Jeon is a research professor at Yonsei University and a former Korea Foundation Fellow at the Harvard Korea Institute.

{ *Time to Eat Lobster* was selected as one of 75 notable
translations of 2015 by *World Literature Today*. }