AS THE CROW FLIES: YI SANG’S AERIAL POETICS

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This essay rereads the work of Yi Sang (1910-1937) against the early twentieth-century revolution in aerial photographic technologies. It argues that the aerial view (and the problem of "blind sight" that attends it) functions as a dynamic organizing principle for understanding the complex network of techno-scientific, political, and existential concerns driving Yi Sang's literary and graphic practice, across both his Japanese and Korean works. Bringing together a comparative framework with select close readings, the essay shows how aeriality furnished Yi Sang with a particular set of structures and signs with which to engage larger questions around the nature of seeing, the limits of objectivity and rationality, and the possibilities and politics of creative expression.

Keywords:
Yi Sang; aerial photography; cartography; science and literature; colonial modernity