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Madness and Modernity: Satire, Allegory, and Revolution in Lu Xun's "A Madman's Diary"

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Abstract:

Lu Xun's "A Madman's Diary" (1918), a pioneering work of modern Chinese literature, uses the lens of madness to diagnose the ideological illnesses plaguing Chinese society at the turn of the 20th century. Published amid the New Culture Movement, the story employs satire and allegory to interrogate Confucian orthodoxy, feudal morality, and the broader cultural structures sustaining systemic oppression. This paper explores how Lu Xun's narrative strategy transforms madness into a vehicle for modern consciousness,

revolutionizing literary form through the use of vernacular language and subjectivity. Drawing on close readings of the text and critical perspectives from scholars such as William Lyell, Leo Ou-fan Lee, and Xiaobing Tang, this research investigates the interplay between madness and modernity, positioning Lu Xun's work as a manifesto for intellectual and cultural renewal.

Keywords: Lu Xun, "A Madman's Diary", Confucianism, New Culture Movement, satire, allegory, vernacular Chinese, modernity, madness, Chinese literature

