

Extinction and Adventures on the Chinese Diasporic Frontier
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ABSTRACT

This article examines the discovery and appropriation of the Chinese diaspora in nationalistic and literary discourse in early 20th-century China. The overseas Chinese experience entered into the main field of vision of the Chinese intellectuals at a strategic moment at the turn of the century, when the diasporic frontier was uncovered only to be re-incorporated into the nationalistic imagination. This analysis begins with a look at Liang Qichao's ambivalent attitude toward the overseas Chinese whom he praised as national colonial heroes on the one hand, and denigrated for tarnishing China's image abroad on the other. In the context of national survival and the theory of evolution, Chinese laborers were hailed by some writers as the exception to the rule of extinction of the unfit. This representation was in no small part reinforced by literary and fictional writings about post-apocalyptic societies where the Chinese once again found their proper role of leadership and dominance over other races. After examining the hitherto largely unknown novels and stories on the subject, the discussion ends with an analysis of the 1906 novel, *Icy Mountains and Snowy Seas*, set in the 24th century in a brave new world near the South Pole.