

VIDEO

China Books Review Launch Event

Three generations of China writers discussed how the nation, and the way outsiders observe it, has changed from the 1960s to today

EDITORS — OCTOBER 17, 2023

GENERAL

HISTORY



Occasionally at the *China Books Review*, we host book talks and other events at Asia Society in New York. On Thursday, we celebrated the launch of this digital magazine with a special live gathering: three generations of writers and observers of China talking about how the field, and the nation itself, has changed over the decades. From the black box of the Mao era, to the opening of the 1980s and new realities post-1989, all the way through the booming 2000s into the tightening 2010s and today, what writers on China — both Chinese and foreign — have witnessed and been able to document has changed dramatically. We surveyed these generational shifts with three serial mini-interviews, in a whistle-stop tour of how the world of China writing got to where it is today.

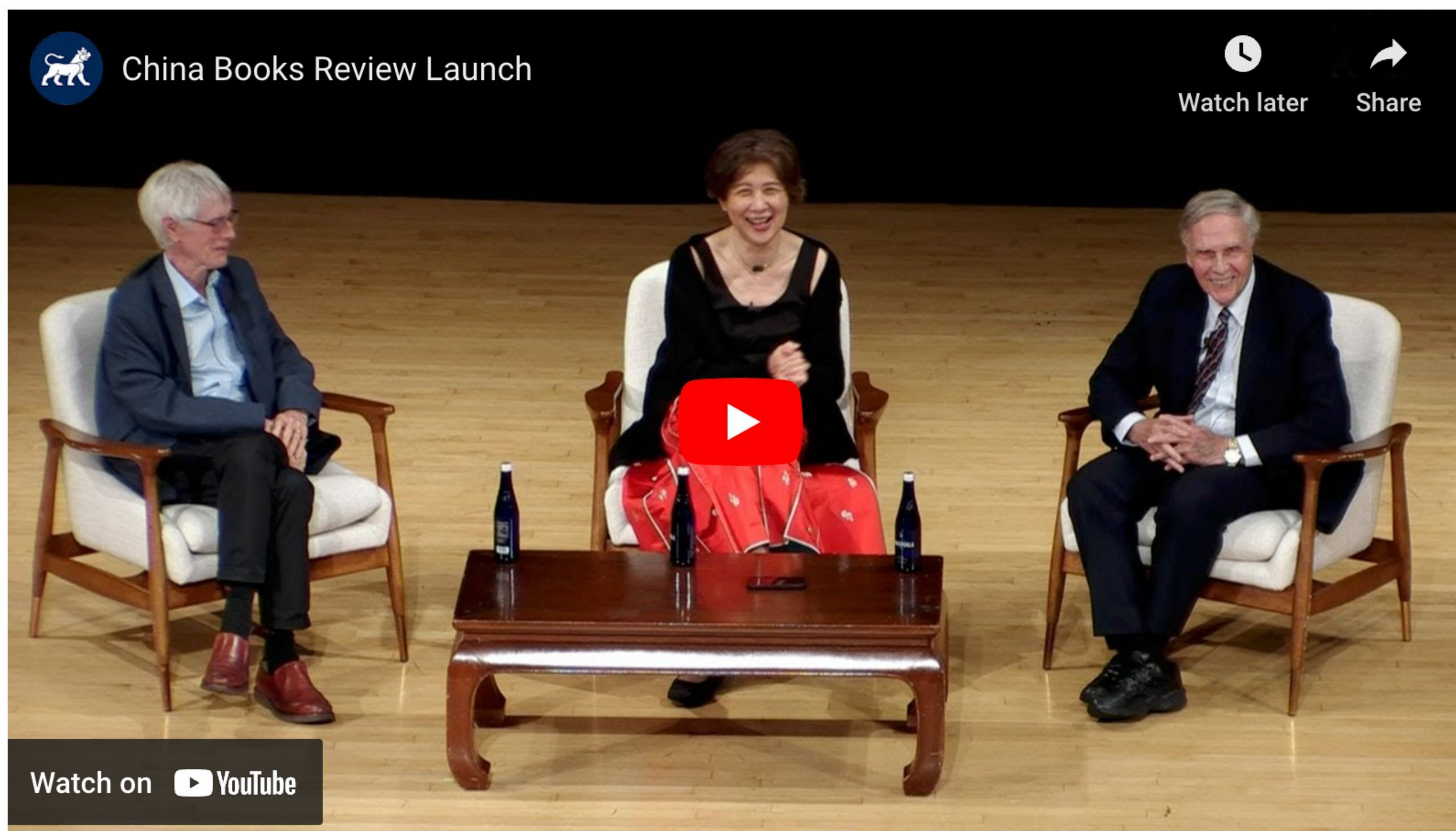
We're delighted to present a video of the event below, with the following programme:

Opening remarks by **Alec Ash**, editor of the *China Books Review*

First panel (2:42): Jianying Zha interviews **Orville Schell** and **Winston Lord** (1960s to 1989)

Second panel (36:32): David Barboza interviews **Ian Johnson** (1990s to 2020)

Third panel (1:00:01): Jiayang Fan interviews **Yangyang Cheng** (China writing today)



Speakers



Alec Ash is a writer and editor focused on China, where he lived from 2008-2022. He is the author of [Wish Lanterns](#), following the lives of young Chinese, and the forthcoming [The Mountains Are High](#) about city escapees in Dali, Yunnan. His articles have appeared in *The New York Review of Books*, *The Atlantic* and elsewhere. He is editor of the *China Books Review*.



Jianying Zha (查建英) is a writer, journalist and cultural commentator in both English and Chinese. She is the author of two books in English, *Tide Players* (2011) and *China Pop* (1995), and six books of non-fiction and fiction in Chinese. Her work has appeared in publications including *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times*. Born and raised in Beijing, educated in China and the U.S., she lives between New York and Beijing.



Orville Schell is the Arthur Ross Director of the [Center on U.S.-China Relations](#) at Asia Society, and co-publisher of the *China Books Review*. He is a former Professor and Dean at the University of California, Berkeley, and author of over ten books about China. He is a regular contributor to *The New York Review of Books*, *The New Yorker*, *Foreign Affairs* and other publications, and has traveled widely in China since the 1970s.



Winston Lord was the U.S. Ambassador to China from 1985 to 1989. Previous to that, he was Director of Policy Planning at State Department, and as special assistant to Henry Kissinger in the early 1970s he was instrumental in the U.S. restoration of relations with China, which he visited nine times. He has also served as president of the Council on Foreign Relations, and Assistant Secretary of State.



David Barboza is a former business reporter for *The New York Times*, who was based in China from 2004 to 2016. He has won multiple awards, including the Pulitzer Prize in 2013. More recently, he is co-founder of the digital news magazine [The Wire China](#) and its data analytics platform [WireScreen](#). He is co-publisher of the *China Books Review*.



Ian Johnson is a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and the author of four books about China, most recently *Sparks*, about China's underground historians. A Beijing-based correspondent for *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and other publications for 20 years, he was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for his reporting on China in 2001.



Jiayang Fan is a Chinese-American journalist, and staff writer for *The New Yorker* since 2016. She was born in Chongqing and immigrated to the United States at the age of seven. Her works include cultural and political commentary, personal history and food critique. Her first book, *Motherland*, is forthcoming in 2024.



Yangyang Cheng is a Research Scholar at Yale Law School's Paul Tsai China Center, where her work focuses on the development of science and technology in China, and U.S.-China relations. Her essays have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, *Los Angeles Review of Books* and elsewhere. Born and raised in China, Cheng received her PhD in physics from the University of Chicago.

“ If you mark the major inflection points of Chinese history since 1949, we haven't seen one of them coming ”

— Orville Schell

The video of this event was also published at [Asia Society](#). ■

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Oct 12, 6:30pm

Come to our launch!

Join us at Asia Society in New York next Thursday, to celebrate our launch. "Three Generations of China Writers" will be on stage, to talk about how the nation has changed from the 1960s to today: Zha Jianying interviews Orville Schell and Winston Lord; David Barboza interviews Ian Johnson; and Jiayang Fan interviews Yangyang Cheng; followed by Q&A and cocktail reception. Registration is required, click for more information

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