During the 2008 U.S. presidential campaign, when Sarah Palin ran as the vice-presidential candidate for the Republican Party, video footage emerged of Kenyan Pentecostal minister Thomas Muthee praying in 2005 for Palin's political success and imploring Jesus to protect Palin from the 'spirit of witchcraft'. The occasion was the culmination of Muthee's two weeks as a guest pastor at the Wasilla Assembly of God, the evangelical Alaskan church that Palin had joined as a teenager, where she retained a loyal following, and where Muthee has spoken on at least two subsequent occasions.

Muthee had apparently earned these invitations to Wasilla through his celebrated claim to have liberated his hometown—Kiamba, Kenya—from a witch and thereby delivered the town from sin and to Jesus, reducing rates of crime and traffic fatalities. Among the greatest enemies in his 'spiritual warfare', he declared, are 'python spirits' corrupting every institution in modern society. The reports of her association with Pastor Muthee contributed to Palin’s—and Africa’s—reputation for ignorance and detachment from reality. However, to the observer unblinded by the presumption that Westerners are inherently scientific, Pastor Muthee’s popularity even in the northernmost reaches of the United States reminds us that visions of the occult inspire people on every continent and inform their understandings of even the most ‘modern’ spheres of contemporary life.

Peter Geschiere’s *Witchcraft, Intimacy and Trust* (2013) does not address these specific events but begins with the author’s own story of how reports of the occult influence in contemporary life took over his research in 1971, as he set out to study the intersections between the national and local government systems in post-independence Cameroon. He quickly discovered that locals perceived those intersections in terms of witchcraft, or, in French, *sorcellerie*. In the once-egalitarian Maka communities that Geschiere studied, the social inequality created by the training and employment of Maka *évolués* as relatively well-paid government bureaucrats provoked numerous accusations of witchcraft/*sorcellerie*, or *djambe*, between envied and envying parties within the same families and communities.

Over the subsequent four decades, Geschiere has studied the effects of political and economic change, or ‘modernity’—including increasing personal mobility, growing social inequality, the growth of the state, the neoliberal weakening of the state, the growing influence of NGOs, international labor migration, and the rapid rise of Pentecostalism—on Maka conceptions of where
and how *djambe* works. This reflexive account of Geschiere's own discovery also documents the emergence of a major growth industry in the historicized study of the occult in Africa and of its complementarity with modernity.

Yet the foremost motive of the Geschiere's latest, broad-ranging book is to 'disenclave Africa' (he borrows the term from Achille Mbembe) and to demonstrate the full membership of that continent in the "modern" world (xxi). In this effort Geschiere sharply criticizes 'culturalist' generalizations that timelessly contrast a general African ontology with the ontologies of other regions of the world. He also opposes the typological distinctions such as 'witchcraft' vs. 'sorcery' that other authors have drawn in order to distinguish the patterns of accusation on one continent from those on another. Witchcraft emerges in a shifting range of forms with a shifting range of causes. Geschiere even shows that any given actor may, in his or her lifetime or in a particular witchcraft drama, be classified at different times as a victim, as a witch, or as a witch finder and healer.

For Geschiere, witchcraft is broadly instructive because it illustrates the obstacles to interpersonal trust, on which social life depends everywhere in the world. He thus points out the flaws in existing scholarly assumptions about trust. Geschiere states that economists wrongly attribute trust to rational choice in the societies they study, while anthropologists wrongly idealize the family in 'anthropological societies' as a pure haven of peaceful reciprocity and solidarity (29–32). Instead, he draws from Georg Simmel the observation that trust between people derives from an active struggle and from an almost religious leap of faith (32).

Ultimately, Geschiere asks what African visions of the occult—and the ways that those visions flourish and change amid modernity—teach us about human social life generally. In pursuit of an answer, Geschiere highlights some points of African distinctiveness. Among the Maka and in much of Africa, the people suspected of witchcraft are usually intimates, and typically members of the victim's own family. However, Geschiere takes Freud's notion of the uncanny, which Geschiere defines as 'the familiar turned against us' (xvii) and 'repressed memories that come back with a vengeance' (27), as evidence that the more general linkage among intimacy, mistrust, and witchcraft is universal. Freud's theory leads Geschiere toward the understanding that 'closeness breeds fears of hidden aggression' (27). African discourses of witchcraft illustrate the general observation that these threats are often experienced as occult—i.e., hidden, mystical, and uncanny—in nature.

Geschiere therefore defines witchcraft as 'the danger inside'. He pays closest attention to those African cases that conform to this definition, and seeks non-African examples whose partial conformity has typically been overlooked. He