

<http://somatosphere.net/?p=11205>

## Web Roundup: Happy Halloween!

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It is Halloween again! This month's web-roundup looks at fear and creepiness, why we feel them and, even more interesting, why we enjoy them.

Our brains are hardwired to feel fear, but it is nice to remember that we are hardly alone in this. We know that crows are very intelligent (and creepy!) animals, but thanks to a [new study](#) we now know that they feel fear and that they can learn from the death of other crows. Whenever one of their own dies, crows try to find out if there is a threat where the death occurred. If there is one, they will not only remember it for a long period of time ([even if it is a human face!](#)) but will also avoid it, and cry out to other crows to alert them about the danger.

As humans, we not only get scared but some things “creep us out”. [But what is creepiness?](#) Well, whenever we identify a dangerous situation, we get scared. But it seems that when we can't tell for sure if we are in danger or not, we feel creeped out instead. In everyday life, people find it creepy when they are not able to predict how someone else will behave. This may explain why people who display unusual non-verbal behaviors or emotional reactions (think someone laughing at unpredictable times) make us uncomfortable.

Fear, creepiness, and death have fueled human imagining since ancient times. And this month, the web provided a great reminder of just how diverse we are when it comes to dealing with these in society. The New Yorker published an interesting article about [vampires, literature, and fears in Victorian times](#), and Slate has a story on [how fear is experienced and designed in Japan](#). Also, the Economist tells us about [the meaning of Halloween](#) and how it got transformed into the hugely popular celebration it is in the U.S. today.

Interestingly, despite the role that fear plays in allowing our survival, it turns out that we actually enjoy experiencing (some) fear. Many, many people seek out experiences of horror and creepiness. We enjoy [scary movies](#), [haunted houses](#), and bizarre stories like [this one from 1923!](#) More current examples are the [new Norwegian fascination for ghost hunting](#), and the latest Airbnb's [rental offer in Paris](#) allowing guests to stay at the

city's catacombs... which means spending the night with six million dead bodies. In case you were wondering, the rental includes a private concert and horror stories by a storyteller (!)

Also, did anyone know [Halloween genes](#) exist? They are the spook, spookier, phantom, and disembodied genes.

Happy Halloween!

More links of interest:

[Pregnant women's bodies resist giving birth in Halloween](#) – Sociological images

[Trump's Halloween mask in Mexico](#) – Time magazine

[The zombie grad student](#) – PhD comics

#### **AMA citation**

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