***Analysis of a Real Haunted House.***

Everyone has his/her own theories and ideas about Haunted Houses, and these claims are based on assumptions and clichés without proofs. However, "real" haunted houses have always existed, as one evidence from Paranormal Story Archives shows, and these houses hide something unusual and mysterious, as "similar haunted houses" from such literary works as "*Haunting of Hill House*" by Shirley Jackson, "*Tales of Horror*" by Laura Mullen and *"Halloween Street*" by Steve Rasnic Tem. The role of these houses, as described in many other articles and essays, is not that simple.

In fact, the existence of the haunted houses is closely connected with moral behaviour of every society; it seems that these houses want to tell very important things to human beings, to reveal secrets of universe and make people believe in supernatural events, in the power of good and evil. All these issues have occupied the public interest for centuries. Although the fascination has changed today, it is still a topic that is a cause for great speculation.

Unfortunately, humans are not able to interpret the signs of these haunted houses, because they are afraid of them, refusing to believe those who experienced something unusual. People always prefer to close their eyes to the most obvious and important matters, but facts are stubborn things, and persons can't hide behind them. They can't deny the existence of such haunted houses, as the house considered the "most haunted house in America" (Paranormal Story Archives, p. 20). This was the home of carpetbagger Charles Wright Congelier, his Mexican wife Lyda, and a young servant girl, Essie, and the house was located at 1129 Ridge Avenue, in Manchester on the North Side of Pittsburgh.

According to data, this house is one of the brightest examples of haunted houses of the past, and the most intriguing one. It attracted attention of many specialists, like Dr. Brunichter and Thomas Edison, and such famous authors as Richard Winer and Nancy Osborn gave their opinion of this house in their book *Haunted Houses*. This article provides a very detailed observation of the house, starting from the tragedy in the family of Charles Wright Congelier, when in the winter of 1871 Lyda discovered Charles having an affair with the maid, she fatally stabbed Charles and chopped off Essie's head. This cruelty was a starting point in turning the house into a haunted one, and, in accordance with various sources, every haunted house reveals a secret connected with murder. Further, as story tells, the house was vacant for more than twenty years, as people were afraid to occupy such horrible place. In 1892 the attempt to accommodate railroad workers failed, as they were unable to live in the place with the sobbing and screaming of a woman.

Of course, no one could tell for sure, whether people really heard those strange noises. This was the end of the 19th century, and humans possessed neither knowledge, nor ability to check the house. Perhaps, the workers' claims were tales, but, on the other hand, there is no smoke without a fire, and further events had proved this proverb. Dr. Adolph C. Brunrichter was the next person who had bought the house. However, a year later something strange happened there, and when the police arrived, they found a decomposed female body strapped to the bed and five headless young women in basement graves. As Winer and Osborn think, Dr. Brunrichter had been experimenting with severed heads. The doctor himself had disappeared and true reasons of the events were not clarified, the only witness was the haunted house.

Strange, as it may seem, the house somehow wanted to remain vacant, and the next awful event took a really tragic turn. One night two of the emigrant Equitable Gas Company workers were found dead in the basement. As the story in the Paranormal Story Archives tells, "one had a board driven like a stake through his chest and the other was hanging from a rafter" (p.20). And the strangest thing is that these men had both been seen alive a few minutes earlier. Since that time many famous scientists had been interested in the house, and in 1920 Thomas Edison came to study it. However, his death prevent him from finishing the experiment, but Winer and Osborn wrote that Thomas Edison's visit to the house at 1129 Ridge Avenue changed his attitude towards afterlife. In fact, as many witnesses revealed, this haunted house was full of sex orgies, demonic possession, torture and murder.

Thus, it was considered as the house of evil, and even its destruction was really strange. On the morning of November 15, 1927 the nearby giant gas storage tank owned by the Equitable Gas Company exploded with a force, which was felt across the county. The force was so strong that people thought that the earthquake had begun. According to Winer and Osborn, the haunted house was the only structure destroyed in the blast, for which no trace was ever found.

This "real" haunting house has some similarities with the houses described by famous writers Shirley Jackson and Laura Mullen. First of all, all these houses terrified people with strange and awful sounds, and made them crazy. Outside they seemed ordinary buildings, but inside they were alive creatures that were invisible to human eyes. The house of Charles Wright Congelier revealed the sobbing and screaming of a woman. And the house in the story of Laura Mullen "*Tales of Horror*" expressed voices and breath of something: "Voices, voices, out of the walls And the ceiling's and floors. And then nothing stays where you put it(Mullen, p. 11). And then another proof: "There was the muted sound of sobbing and yet THERE WAS NO ONE IN THAT ROOM!" (Mullen, p. 13). In the story of Shirley Jackson strange things also happened in the house: sounds, pounding, and 'hallucinations'.

Thus, in all three cases people heard some strange noises. Such similarity is obvious, as these two literary works were based on real facts, Mullen and Jackson analysed odd events in the haunted houses, making their own conclusions. However, both of them thought that every haunted house covered someone's crime, and ghosts sought justice. The works of these writers were aimed to investigate one of the most intriguing paranormal phenomena of the universe. Shirley Jackson decided to write a story about a haunted house after reading about a group of nineteenth century "psychic researchers" who studied a house and reported their supposedly scientific findings to the Society for Psychic Research.

Although, the writer failed to discover something great in these reports, she was really excited by the prospect of creating her own haunted house and providing her own explanation of it. She even found out a California house, which looked like a haunted house. In addition to all these attempts, she read a lot of ghost stories, and, as a matter of fact, she believed in ghosts. That's why her haunted house was so real.

Another similarity between a 'real' house and two fiction houses lays in people's perceptions of normal and abnormal. They used to accept things as they are, if they imagine a haunted house it must be dark, old and strange. Otherwise, they won't believe in its existence. Thus, the haunted house described by Shirley Jackson is just the same, as the real house of Charles Wright Congelier and invented house of Mullen. Here, how Jackson describes it: "Hill House, not sane, stood by itself against its hills, holding darkness within; it had stood so for eighty years and might stand for eighty more. Within, walls continued upright, bricks met neatly, floors were firm, and doors were sensibly shut; silence lay steadily against the wood and stone of Hill House, and whatever walked there, walked alone" (Jackson, p.1).

This description reveals the dark energies of the house and shows the real protagonists of both literary works – the houses, which fulfil their role as Bad Places, the horrific archetypes of any location with a powerful sense of wrongness. With their dark descriptions Jackson and Mullen suggest rather than explain, and frighten more by what they do not say about the houses rather than what they do.

As a matter of fact, the haunted houses of Jackson and Mullen were based on their discovery of the quiet evil that pervades ordinary life. Everything around - the house, the person, the action - is never quite what they seem to be. This is true in our modern life. This is the third similarity among three houses. All of them revealed something hidden beneath, something that seemed simple and, at the same time, different from peoples' ideas of universe. In short, this is supernatural, human beings are unable to understand it, if they don't make an effort to accept all components of a 'haunted house', they will be trapped in their own prejudices. There are plenty of clues, but the proof is seldom, and at the centre of everything there may never have been anyone at all.

The role of two fiction houses is quite obvious, they are created to make people hear something, something that they want to identify, but it is so faint and distant that human beings are unable to make it out. Not quite simple things, but much more difficult and complex matters. By creating their haunted houses, both writers wanted to show that there was no logical explanation to certain supernatural phenomena. In both cases haunted houses were main protagonists that wanted to prevent people from some awful actions. The worst thing was that they affected everyone, not only those who lived in these houses, but the neighbours and other members of the society as well. Such was the notion of Mullen and Jackson.

The supernatural occurrences may or may not be directly connected to someone special. In fact, neither the characters nor readers are quite sure of what they experience in *Haunting of* *Hill House* and *Tales of Horror* - but all are profoundly effected by them. For instance, in *Tales of Horror* readers are really affected by the power of each sentence: "This house has been Lived in, he said, speaking in a low tone but with great intensity, by an extremely Beautiful but utterly evil woman. Yes, yes, I feel that too. This week Workmen are taking the thing apart, stone by stone. Oh this? Just. a little something I found in the ruins. Don't bring it into the house!" (Mullen, p. 12). This description doesn't seem very logic, but it has the power to stir our feelings and emotions.

In summary, a real haunted house is a place that hides many secrets of good and evil, of morality and crimes. Human beings are unable to understand these phenomena because they don't want to accept things that frighten them, they don't want to look at the core of these supernatural events. They start with the basics, and as they grow older, they begin to focus more on the details. And it is obvious that obsession with details to the exclusion of the basics is a sure way to begin losing the true facts, the real understanding.

***Works Cited.***

1. Jackson Shirley. *The Haunting of Hill House,* Penguin, 1984.

2. Mullen Laura. *The Tales of Horror,* Kelsey Street Press, 1999.

3. Paranormal Story Archives. January 2002. The Original "Most Haunted House in America".