

HOWARD WRIGHT
THE OLD TESTAMENT

When the house was suddenly possessed,
she began writing biblical quotes high on the walls
and low behind the furniture around the four sides
of the room. When this didn't work,
she rolled up the carpet and continued with permanent marker
across the grain of floorboards. Not much use,

but it eased the fear, if not the fact, of the possession.
Later, maybe a fortnight, when the dread became unbearable,
the noises at night, the voices and laughter,
she climbed into the roof-space and lined it with pages
from the Old Testament. She broke the spine
and laid them flat, side by side, like a membrane,

a flimsy shield to hold the malevolence back.
It changed nothing. By the time she had run out of pages
and things to write, the spirits were happy enough
to let her stay. They were going nowhere,
having read between the lines, blessed as they were
with the other torments and tormentors they saw there.