Altitude X 2

Janice Williamson

*trudere* to push, thrust

1: an expression of intention to inflict evil, injury, or damage

2: one that threatens

3: an indication of something impending <the air held a t. of rain>
later she got a good education
a job with promise
a title with privilege
in spite of her denial, all this mattered
she moved across the country
gaining altitude in flatland
(her new community could not forgive her origins)

at every turn, she condemned ivory tower elitism:
she gained altitude.
<the air held a t. of rain>

(death threats would bring her down to earth)
one night, someone else (not her father) returned to put words in her mouth. chalked marks on her door. "look under" scrawled his hand and "under" her book cover his words pushed into her mouth. she could barely speak.
(he wrote inside the space of her imagining)

KILL THE FUCKEN MINISHIT
NICE SHOOTING M___ L___
KILL THE SLUTS AND MINISHIT
UP YOUR DIKES
X KILL WOMEN
in the classroom, he said it didn't matter. he knew who they were and who
they were not. his lists of women belly full of bullets wore the hairline frac-
ture of his sight.

the target was moving,

she could take her pick. either this woman or that feminist. lesbian or
straight. pink woman or not. one at a time or all in a bunch. her body,

this body was nothing more than an internal passageway of arms legs
loathsome torso.
the closer his words came to her body, the higher she climbed. switchbacks were arduous and long; her legs grew heavy as snow crowns, the bend of supple firs. at this temperature, her body too numb to feel, she craved higher ground somewhere above the hoodoos. she might have climbed outside her skin were she not intent on establishing a point of view.
(the threat is the expression is the one that threatens)

he took a step back to examine his work
wiped chalked hands on his pants
he smiled at his verbal puns
the play
the threat is not (yet) his body
the threat did not name himself
the threat is his body's script
the turn round his vowels
his writing marks his absence

erasure, the source of his power
he pushed and he pushed
she was sure she was dead
though she could still move her lips