

## **The Maximum Effective Range**

*for the victims at Virginia Tech, April 16, 2007*

The diameter of the bullet is .22 inches  
and the distance of its maximum effective range  
is thirty yards, but further when fired by anger  
fueled with paranoia, curving with the earth,  
falling in a graceful, parabolic arc, unlike these  
thirty-two dead, one suicide, twenty-six wounded.  
The muzzle flash of a Walther P22 discharging  
one hundred rounds is orange; the results maroon,  
spilling out into a hallway from under a dorm room door.  
In an expanding color wheel of panic and space:  
thirty hungry ambulances, three hundred terrified parents,  
a shocked nation of three hundred million.  
But the old man who holds the door closed against the fury,  
inches and moments from death, sixty-two years removed  
from the six million dead of Auschwitz, of Buchenwald,  
reduces the maximum effective range in a classroom considerably,  
while the echoes of the shots and the moans of the dying  
carried by the howling winds of that day  
reach distant shores far across an ocean named for peace,  
and the maximum effective range of the sounds  
somehow amplified and heard by heaven,  
washes over the ears of an unrelenting God.

**Matt Hohner**

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