

THESE SHOES AND THIS HANDBAG

*Hannah West
University of Bath*

These shoes and this handbag
Unworn and unwanted, yet issued
Somehow didn't fit in with the rest of the kit
Hardly the stuff of hardy seafarers, naval
engineers.

These shoes and this handbag,
Unchanged but unused, yet issued
A bygone relic
Of wartime telephonists, radio operators.

These shoes and this handbag,
Unexpected and unchallenged, yet issued
Amusingly compensating for skirts with no pockets
Yet reminding us of our place, don't forget.

These shoes and this handbag,
Of limited combat utility, were issued
I find out when the men got their weapons
To the women before us who couldn't bear arms.



Biography

Hannah is a final year PhD student at the University of Bath. Her research explores the tensions surrounding women's participation in counterinsurgency and what this tells us about 'combat' and the 'frontline'. Hannah is using creative methods to reflect on the gendered aspects of her own military service. Visit her website at: www.hannah-west.org