

For what we are about to receive

Born in the fifties, our second-hand mindsets
leapfrogged back to the war and the one before that
and before that to Victoria, whose craggy silhouette
came with us sometimes to the sweet shop.

Queens you had to keep asking God to save
but Britannia who sat behind her would stand up
for us. Great aunts and grandmothers aped both
and at sixty graciously accepted cameo roles

in which they loured, shook sticks like tridents
and passed round meat paste sandwiches and scones
from doiled stands, while we were given
Blackie's Children's Classics – Copperfields

and Eyres and Twists, abridged – to teach us
that as children we belonged in prison
or on the streets, that we had escaped slavery
and disease by the skin of our century,

should be grateful for our plateful and eat it all
may the Lord make us truly thankful.