

torch had been passed to a new generation, to the anger of the Manchester Free Trade Hall. They might mean little to you, or they might mean as much as they do to me. Why do we differ so? What explains our passions and our enthusiasms? I hope our scientists never find out.

Liam Clancy put it beautifully:

'Dylan articulated what the rest of us wanted to say, but couldn't.'

But Dylan put it even better, describing himself as being constantly in a state of becoming. The journey is more important than anything else, described in one of his songs as, 'he not busy being born is busy dying'.

The relevance to the *BJGP*? Heaven knows, although it is perhaps an opportunity to own up to the deeply immature fact that I included at least one Dylan quote in every single speech and lecture I gave as RCGP Chairman. Pointless? Absolutely. But many great artists give us clues to unravelling the great puzzle of life, and as GPs we face more life and more lives than almost anyone else.

And my son (age 27 and equally besotted) bet me that I couldn't write this review without mentioning the words protest, Judas, or poet. Well, I nearly made it.

David Haslam

Repeat prescriptions

The time has come to summon up the strength.
Collect the bundle of green paper slips;
sit in front of the computer, fingers poised,
deep breath, it's time for repeat prescriptions.

The first lists six different drugs
for blood pressure, diabetes and cholesterol.
But he's only asked for three; what does it mean?
Is it ignorance, or side effects he's getting,
or ambivalence from being made
a patient when he wasn't feeling ill.

The next one's for citalopram; it's many months
since she told me the deep sadness of her life.
She doesn't come back but wants more pills.
Does it mean that she's better or she's worse,
she finds me difficult to talk to,
or just the distress and the tears.

So what do I do, turn a blind eye, reissue,
postpone decision till next month.
Or scrawl a curt response
"Must see doctor first".
It's hard enough to know what you need
when we meet for 10 minutes face to face.
And I can look into your doleful eyes
and see the wringing of your hands.
But these green computer generated slips alone
are impenetrable to me.
And there are so many today ...

David Memel