to. Talbingo has a population of 241 — or at least it did before its only teacher Miss Barker went missing — so Eleanor steps into the fold.

What ensues is a novel that is impossible to categorise. *The Bus On Thursday* is part romcom, part horror, part whodunnit, but all-consuming. Eleanor will make you snort with laughter; when describing her breast cancer support group she finds it intolerable to be:

'... surrounded by fifteen middle-aged women in aggressively cheerful headscarves there was just way too much laughter and hugging, like cancer gives you licence to be zany. Seriously it was painful.'

She will make you wince with pain; when her date reacts badly to her prosthetic breast, she will also make you realise that, a little like *The bus on Thursday*, life and medicine can be unpredictable, funny, sad and a rocky ride.

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Brushstrokes. Thoughts, Poems And Reflections On Having Had A Small Stroke At 34 Years Old

Giles Dawney

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RECOVERING FROM STROKE

Giles Dawney is a graduate entrant into medicine. When he was 34, he suffered an embolic stroke, which presented with expressive dysphasia and facial weakness while he was talking to his wife. He moved swiftly from being a junior doctor to being a patient, going through all the familiar processes and stages of grief. This book is a collection of his poems, thoughts and reflections on the new world in which he found himself. He says:

'I write for many reasons; sometimes for fun, sometimes to be heard, sometimes to wrestle with something I'm intrigued by, sometimes because I'm scared.'

As this suggests, both poems and

reflections often come across as streams of consciousness on the themes of the physical and psychological sequelae of his stroke, loss, support, healing, and aids to recovery.

It's a good example of what has been described as 'creative words for health & wellbeing', to quote *Playspace Publications* (playspacepublications.com).

Playspace publishes poetry pamphlets, cards, stories, anecdotes, and essays, some coming from Maggie's Centres in Scotland (www.maggiescentres.org), where free, practical, emotional, and social support is given to people with cancer, and their families and friends.

There is now an established movement of creative writing for therapeutic purposes, with organisations in the UK and internationally. A good example is Lapidus: 'the words for wellbeing association' (www.lapidus.org.uk).

Brushstrokes is written by a doctor, of course, and this brings both particular insights due to our medical knowledge, and special difficulties due to being both patient and a doctor. The book illustrates these tensions very well and also shows us that there is no easy way to move forward after a stroke except through the hard physical work involved in recovery. Adapting to a different sense of self after a major health event like a stroke is challenging.

This is an honest and courageous book.

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SO I CAN UNDERSTAND, RUN ME THROUGH IT ONE MORE TIME, LILY... YOU KICKED YOUR TOE. IT HURT SO MUCH THAT YOU WENT TO THE LOCAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT.

BUT I FORGOT TO BRING ALONG MY PUFFER, DIDN'T I? 'COURSE, I GOT SHORT OF WIND. THE DOCTORS DECIDED TO DO X-RAYS AND SCANS, JUST TO BE SURE. IT TOOK SO LONG, AND I WAS GETTING SO UPSET I COULDN'T BREATHE. SO THEY ADMITTED ME, DIDN'T THEY?

'COURSE, THE LUNG DOCTORS THOUGHT IT WAS MY HEART, THEY CALLED IN THE HEART DOCTORS... MORE TESTS, OK? THEN I GOT THE RUNS, SO THEY SENT ME TO ANOTHER DOCTOR FOR COLLIE-SCOPE.

AND FINALLY, AFTER SOME OTHER DOCTORS CHECKED WHETHER I WAS SAFE TO GO HOME, A SHRINK DOCTOR TRIED TO WORK OUT WHY I WAS UNHAPPY. TURNS OUT...

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