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Disturbance

Jamie O'Neill

Scribner, £6.99

This is the second reprint of work O'Neill published a decade before *At Swim, Two Boys*. While *Kilbrack* (1990), reintroduced to us in April, is more entertainingly puckish than its original reception suggested, Scribner seems to have lesser hopes for *Disturbance* (1989) since it performs as a kind of in-house advertisement for the first chapter of *At Swim* attached at the end. The centre of the novel is the game of Disturbance that the narrator, motherless 14-year-old Nilus Moore, plays with a matt-black jigsaw while his world physically and mentally collapses around him. Though elementally plotted, the story is populated by quirky characters and is told in language relished as much for its idiomatic sound as its verisimilitude. *Disturbance* is no masterpiece, but it could have stood alone as a playful little diversion without being so glaringly cast in the shadow of the author's biggest work.

John Kenny