'Children's Literature: Criticism and the Fictional Child' draws on literary and critical theory to argue that children's literature criticism through its often contradictory versions of the 'child' reveals the realm of 'childhood' as one constructed by the adult reader. Crucially, however, this construction is not seen to be an incorrect or partial 'idealisation' of the child, as is commonly argued elsewhere in children's literature criticism and further discussions of childhood, but instead is understood to be about a textuality to which there is no 'outside' - all meanings and identities, including childhood, are here understood as produced in and as language. From this position, the book demonstrates that both children's literature criticism and the texts it studies are underpinned by the narratives of the liberal arts' educational ideals and their attendant socio-political and personal ideologies. In the book, literary discussion is placed in relation to wider debates about childhood in psychology and psychotherapy. The book argues for a significant re-thinking of 'childhood' and approaches to children's literature.