Doris Lessing’s novel *The Fifth Child* has been extensively analysed since its publication in 1988. By some it has been labelled as a Gothic horror story whereas others have interpreted as a feminist contribution to literature. In brief, the novel tells the story of the Lovatt family in which the mother, Harriet, during her fifth pregnancy, perceives that her child has monstrous characteristics, a sensation that remains also after the child, Ben, has been born. By applying a psychoanalytical approach and the narratological concept of focalisation, as developed by Mieke Bal, this essay attempts to broaden the understanding of the events taking place in *The Fifth Child* and its sequel *Ben, in the World*. When reading the books from this perspective, a pattern emerges in which feelings of guilt and shame in the form of “the shadow” are projected onto the fifth child who eventually turns into the scapegoat of the dysfunctional Lovatt family. Consequently, Ben develops the characteristics of a self-effacing child, constantly seeking the approval of his surroundings. By using focalisation it becomes apparent that the novel might not be interpreted as a horror story, but rather as a description of how childhood experiences form us as individuals.