

Infant Savant

NATON LESLIE

*Madonna and child on
the south-east crossing pier
Notre Dame, early 14th century*

Her crown sports fleur-de-lis, her face troubled,
pursed brow, prescient, draped in three layers
of cloth, the last trimmed in lace. The baby
rests on the crook of her arm, perched primly,
her body bends under the prized burden,
accepting the weight. Her blind marble eyes

are open. The poised child is a statesman
in disguise, with Caesar ringlets, the pouched
cheeks of Cicero. Her arm is his bench,
his right hand reaches, gripping her wrappings
near the throat, for balance or to keep her
at bay. His left holds the orb of power.

*Look, he seems to say, I am not a child.
I am really God. So get used to it.*