

Shayne Punim

Jared Beloff

You hadn't spoken in months
when I was born too early
during a snowstorm in April.

They thought I would die.
A small thing. A vast thing.
A sweet thing. A sweet face.

Shayne punim

On the night I was born
my father's words wouldn't come,
breath he tried to hold in his hands.

The words behind his face
mouth swaying forward and back
as if caught or catching.

On the night I was born
you spoke a language
like my premature body

A sweetness in your
voice named a love
that might be fleeting.

Shayne punim

A term of endearment
replacing a name for a child
swaying between living and dying.

Punim from the Hebrew *paniym*
plural for faces, a presence, a wholeness
of being, of breath between parted lips.

Shayne from the German *schoen*
for beauty, for sweetness.
The two are not the same.

I weighed no more than a pair
of apples you might have held
in your hand and just as long.

Jared Beloff is a teacher and poet who lives in Queens, NY with his wife and two daughters. You can find his work in *Contrary Magazine*, *The Westchester Review*, *Gyroscope Review* and elsewhere. You can find him online at www.jaredbeloff.com. Follow him on Twitter @read_instead.