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Pity

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Pity

I know a woman who lives
inside the body of a bird.
I worry about her,
how she'll eat,
how she'll survive.
She's a spoonbill,
huge and pink and scarlet,
lovely except for her flattened bill,
which looks like someone
splayed it with a heavy boot.

I'm afraid people will laugh
at the way her wide, gray mouth
hangs from the otherwise
perfect shaft of her body,
at how she must sweep
those pie-plate lips
back and forth in the lake's muck.

What if someone
says something to hurt her?
With great wings, she lifts above me,
beating the air into submission,
trailing her long, jointed legs
as she goes,
not once looking back

Paulann Whitman Petersen