**Gabriela Mistral** (1889-1957), pseudonym for Lucila Godoy y Alcayaga, was born in Vicuña, Chile. The daughter of a dilettante poet, she began to write poetry as a village schoolteacher after a passionate romance with a railway employee who committed suicide. She taught elementary and secondary school for many years until her poetry made her famous. She played an important role in the educational systems of Mexico and Chile, was active in cultural committees of the League of Nations, and was Chilean consul in Naples, Madrid, and Lisbon. She held honorary degrees from the Universities of Florence and Guatemala and was an honorary member of various cultural societies in Chile as well as in the United States, Spain, and Cuba. She taught Spanish literature in the United States at Columbia University, Middlebury College, Vassar College, and at the University of Puerto Rico.

The love poems in memory of the dead, *Sonetos de la muerte* (1914), made her known throughout Latin America, but her first great collection of poems,*Desolación* [Despair], was not published until 1922. In 1924 appeared*Ternura* [Tenderness], a volume of poetry dominated by the theme of childhood; the same theme, linked with that of maternity, plays a significant role in *Tala*, poems published in 1938. Her complete poetry was published in 1958.

**Poem: “Fear” by Gabriela Mistral (translated by Doris Dana)**

I don’t want them to turn

my little girl into a swallow.

She would fly far away into the sky

and never fly again to my straw bed,

or she would nest in the eaves

where I could not comb her hair.

I don’t want them to turn

my little girl into a swallow.

I don’t want them to make

my little girl a princess.

In tiny golden slippers

how could she play on the meadow?

And when night came, no longer

would she sleep at my side.

I don’t want them to make

my little girl a princess.

And even less do I want them

one day to make her queen.

They would put her on a throne

where I could not go to see her.

And when nighttime came

I could never rock her …

I don’t want them to make

my little girl a queen!

Central to the poem "Fear" by Gabriela Mistral is a mother's anxiety about losing her child.  This is, in part, a selfish fear as the mother worries that the child will become like a swallow and metaphorically "fly off" to be with others, teachers, classmates, friends, and not her.  That the mother is a poor person rooted to one place is evidenced in this metaphor that depicts the child like a bird escaping her sight.  Also the mother worries that the child will leave her little "straw bed" and become "a princess." for if she becomes a princess, then the metaphorical "they" may make her a queen; with their royal obligations, the princess and queen will not be able to be together.  Here, then, is also the expression of fear for the daughter as life's obligations and pitfalls meet her.

Through the use of metaphor and repetition, the mother expresses her fear of her daughter's growing up and leaving her and encountering potential harm. She combs the girl's hair and does other physical things that she may keep the child close as long as she can.