



GOLČIN GILĀNI

GOLČIN GILĀNI, pen name of the poet MAJD-AL-DIN MIR-FAKRĀ'I (b. Rašt, 11 Dey 1288 Š./1 January 1910; d. London, 29 Āḍar 1351 Š./20 December 1972; [Figure 1](#)). His father, Sayyed Mahdi Mir-fakrā'i, was a state official originally from Tafreš in central Persia. He was the deputy head of the Department of Finance in Rašt when Golčín was born. Golčín received his elementary education in Rašt and then moved to Tehran at age fifteen, at least in part as a result of an unwanted early marriage arranged for him by his family ('Ābedi, ed., p. 21; Rowšan et al., p. 715). He had already published some juvenalia in Rašt, and his new teachers at Sirus and Dār al-Fonun high schools soon discovered his talent. His *ġazals*, which he enthusiastically entrusted to his teacher and mentor Ḥasan Waḥid Dastgerdi, founder of the recently-established literary journal *Armaġān*, were a regular feature of that journal between 1928 and 1933.

In 1930, Golčín entered Tehran's Teachers Training College (Dār al-mo'allemin-e 'āli; see [EDUCATION xix](#)), where he studied literature and philosophy. Three years later he received a government scholarship to study abroad, perhaps with the understanding that he would continue in the humanities. Nāder Nāderpur states that the young poet studied medicine for a few years at the American University of Beirut, and went to London only after World War II broke out (Nāderpur, p. 25). This is, however, contradicted by other sources, according to which Golčín was one of the last group of one hundred students that the Rezā Shah government sent to Europe annually on scholarship. The group went first to France and, after a while, to England (Ganji, p. 624; 'Ābedi,



ed., pp. 15, 53). In any event, within a year of his arrival in London, Golčín decided to study medicine, partly as a challenge to himself. In response, the Persian government cut his scholarship and he began to work at odd jobs to support himself. His scholarship was renewed a few months later, when the Persian government approved his decision to study medicine. All government-sponsored Persian students were called back when World War II broke out, but Golčín ignored the order to return and stayed on in London, working for a while as an ambulance driver for the Civil Defense under the London County Council (‘Ābedi, ed., pp. 16-18; Arberry, p. 231).

In 1943 Golčín was hired by the British Movitone Film Company to write, translate, and record voice-over narration for its news and war propaganda films. He earned enough to resume his studies, while the newsreels, which typically began with the statement “Golčín reports from England,” spread his name all over Persia, as they were shown in Persian cinemas before feature films through the late 1940s (Eslāmi-Nadušan, p. 5; Arberry, p. 232). Around the same time, Golčín began to work for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), chiefly as a translator. The job put him in contact with prominent Persians residing in London, including Mojtabā Minovi, Mas‘ud Farzād (q.v.), and Abu’l-Qāsem Ṭāheri.

In 1945 he received his medical license from the Royal College of Surgeons and started his general practice; a year later, he received his doctoral degree, specializing in tropical diseases and hygiene (Arberry, p. 232; ‘Ābedi, ed., p. 20). Thereafter, in addition to practicing medicine in his private office, he also worked as a medical consultant with the Persian embassy in London, mainly referring Persian officials with medical needs to specialists in various fields (‘Ābedi, ed., pp. 23-24; Foruḥi, p. 79). The work earned him the nickname Doktor-e Sefārat (the embassy doctor).

Throughout the 1940s, Golčín sent his compositions to Persia for publication; many appeared in the literary journals of the early 1940s such as *Sokan*, *Yaḡmā*, *Armaḡān*, *Foruḡ*, *Yādgār*, and *Jahān-e now*. Judging by these compositions, as well as the slim volume of poetry he published in London, *Nehofta* (1948, 72 pp.), the old formulaic habits of his youthful compositions were steadily losing their grip on him, giving his work a more free-flowing style. Golčín also adopted a series of formal innovations which by then were practiced in Persia as well, most notably by poets like Parviz Nātel Kānlari and Fereydun Tavallali. Yet Golčín’s work features little of the sophisticated phraseology of the latter group; it certainly lacks the complex usages that



distinguish Nimā Yušij's poetic style from other mid-century Persian poets. In content, Golčīn's later compositions can be distinguished by two interrelated preoccupations, description of nature and expression of intense feelings. The two similar environments of his native city, Rašt, and his adopted city of London dominate these works. As Nāderpur states: "it seems as though he has carried the lush, green land and the humid weather of Gilān in his suitcase to England" (Nāderpur, 24). Several of Golčīn's compositions of the 1940s were translated into English by Arthur J. Arberry and published first in *Ruzgār-e now*, a London-based Persian journal published under the auspices of the British government, and later in his *Persian Poems*.

In the late 1940s, perhaps after the publication of *Nehofta*, Golčīn began to study English poetry in general, and particularly the Romantics. His other two London collections, *Farib* and a verse story in the form of *mosammaṭ* titled *Mehr o kin* (Love and rancor), both printed and distributed privately and bearing no publisher or date, express romantic leitmotifs such as can be found in the poetry of William Wordsworth or John Keats. Certainly, Golčīn comes far closer to expressing specific affinities with the English Romantics than any Persian poet of his or later generations; his depiction of nature as a living force and of human beings as creatures at once inspired and awed by its majesty suffice to demonstrate this affinity. He also portrays childlike personae revealing a sense of naturalness and naivete that is lost as they grow into adulthood.

Golčīn's poetic output declined noticeably in the 1950s, possibly due to his long absence from a Persian-speaking environment (cf. his letters to Pesyān in 'Ābedi, ed., pp. 28, 32), an unhappy marital life, pressures of his professional occupation, or a combination thereof. Still, Golčīn managed to publish one more collection of poems, *Gol-i barā-ye to* "A rose for you" (Tehran, 1969). This was the poet's fourth and last collection and the only one of his works to be published in his native country. It also remains the only one readily available to Persian readers, and the one on which much of his reputation rests. In fact, many readers know Golčīn through a single poem, "Bārān" (The rain), first published in the journal *Soḡān* in 1944. That single poem, with its simultaneous charm and simplicity, has been the basis of more discussion of the poet and his oeuvre than all his other works put together (Yusofi; Langarudi, pp. 255-56; Šafī'i Kadkani, p. 556).

Golčīn was married three times. The first marriage was to a youthful distant cousin named Jalil-al-Sādāt, reportedly arranged by his family when he was



thirteen years old and still living in Rašt. His second marriage was to Irān-dokt Meġnāṭ in 1951 (?), and the third to Šahin Jasuri Tabrizi in the early 1960s; both wives were Persian women living in England. Many of the Persian literati who visited Golčīn in London in the 1950s speak of his family life as rather unhappy and of his mental state as at times distraught. According to his long-time friend Ḥosayn-‘Ali Solṭānzāda Pesyān, Golčīn would “from time to time sink into silence or display a peculiar impatience, such that for a few days it would be difficult to speak or converse with him. At such times, his complexion would grow dark, his glance would turn restless, and he would communicate by uttering brief and broken or inappropriate statements” (Pesyān, cited in ‘Ābedi, ed., p. 21). Golčīn died of leukemia at the age of 61.

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Other noteworthy notices on Golčīn’s life and works are: Iraj Afšār, “Dargodašt-e Golčīn Gilāni,” *Rāhnemā-ye ketāb* 15, 1351 Š./1973, p. 882.

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