We are not the first ones to observe that Miguel Serrano’s country scrimps him deserved awards—he, an author published by prestigious British and American publishing houses, and published even in Farsi and Japanese translation. It’s not long since another of his works, C.G. Jung and Herman Hesse: A Record of Two Friendships, has come out in French (Geneva: Georg Editeur, 1991) and it is in the Belgian magazine Vouloir that essayist Bruno Dietsch reserves the following comment for the Chilean writer: Nemo propheta a acceptus est in patria (Ciudad de los Césares, No. 39, Year 1991). To this we must add that his work has been recently republished in France and Russia.

What memories have you from ’38?
Miguel Serrano: It was a secret generation. We lived thinking the world was us and nothing else. There other groups with whom we had no great contact. We got together in night cafés, where we talked. It was the era of the cafés. Our meetings were in the restaurant called Miss Universe, which was located on San Diego’s second block. I always lived around those neighbourhoods, around Lira street.

And I remember that at night I walked around those places—one could walk at any time of the night—in a marvellous Santiago of low houses, where it was all sky and muggings did not exist. So many things have vanished, even if the rails on Lira street still exist, those rails along which we walked with Héctor Barreto, who was the leader of that group and that generation. Sometimes we remained in conversation until they closed the bars, and then everyone left for home.

We had an excess of money that took us no effort to earn because it was an allowance given to us by our families. At the time we stopped on rails of Lira street and hurled up the money. It was a generous gesture for the ghosts and we carried on walking, on the rails, one on one, and one on the other until I arrived home and he got lost in the night.

Walking along those streets I arrived at the Miss Universo restaurant. Who was there? Julio Molina Miller (author of La Primavera del Soldado [The Soldier’s Spring], poetry, 1944); Robinson Gaete, a personage no one knows existed; Guillermo Atías, who later came to be a leader of the communist party and died exiled in Paris. Also Santiago del Campo, the Smoked Tiger; formidable people, who lived the night talking about books, about European authors: Panait Istrati, Knut Hamsun, authors of their time and philosophers with an affinity to Greek culture, so admired by Barreto and Santiago del Campo.

That was our group, which would later make contact with another group, interestingly thanks to me: one day, while attending a family wedding, I had the opportunity to meet Vicente Huidobro, who was my mother’s cousin: when Huidobro learnt that I wrote, he invited me to his home and there I met Braulio Arenas, Enrique Gómez-Correa, and Eduardo Anguita. Also thanks to Braulio Arenas, I made contact with the notable poet,
Jaime Rayo, who wrote an extraordinary book: Sombra y Sujeto [Shadow and Subject] (poetry, 1939) and who subsequently committed suicide.

Thus we gradually connected with each other, until the moment came of Barreto’s murder. It was the time of the Spanish Civil War (1936). Until Barreto’s death, we, who dispensed with politics, considered becoming preoccupied with politics an act of treason against poetry or literature. Barreto was killed by Nazis in a street scuffle, because Barreto had previously become a socialist. I remember that Atías, who was the most political among us all, would say to Barreto ‘how is it that you, Jason, have gotten into the contingent struggle?’ He replied: ‘I have become a socialist because I feel sorry for the children barefoot in the rain.’ But, in reality, he had nothing to do with politics. In fact, on the same day he was murdered, he came to see me at my home in Lira to invite me out for a coffee.

On that occasion he confessed to me that he was very disillusioned with politics and, above all, with the socialists. He was writing short stories of a social type, some fantastic ones like ‘La Noche de Juan’, and he said to me: ‘I wanted my book to be illustrated by a friend of mine, a painter. The party told me they would not allow this because they had their own painters and illustrators. Then, I told him: “It’s just that the one I want to bring to you is an extraordinary guy, because he can draw a perfect circle with his eyes closed and this only Leonardo was able to do”. For this reason they would stand staring at me and think: “This guy is mad”. That evening he went to the Volga café, which was on Matta avenue.

It was the time of street scuffles. The socialists at the time were mobilised militarily. And in this scuffle Barreto died. The socialists then came out on the street. Vicente Huidobro materialised immediately and said to us: ‘You come to fight against fascism’. And that is how I entered politics. The truth is that I have never belonged to a political party. I did collaborate during those years with Blanca Luz Brum, who was a Uruguayan poetess based in Chile and was of the Left and published a magazine called Sobre la Marcha [On the March].
The Popular Front, something like what today is the 'Concert', an alliance of all kinds of parties, was also being created in the world—bourgeois, Marxist, and even liberal, in order to combat Nazism. The Spanish war, in particular. I myself wrote for the Frente Popular daily, but I gradually became disillusioned. Vicente Huidobro said to me one day: 'Miguel, I invite you to come with me to fight in Spain', and I replied: 'Why should I go there? I will first read the books by Marx; Capital, and all those books from that time'. And after spending six months locked in reading those books, I ended up completely anti-Marxist. I said to myself: 'This is absurd'.

I then distanced myself from all political action. I then came to know in those years La Marquesa estate. It was the estate of Pilo Yáñez (Juan Emar), friend of Vicente Huidobro, where many people of the Left met. Alvaro Yáñez, who was a fantastic character. He rose at night in order to write. He was a noctambulist. At lunch time he sat at the head of the table, did not speak a word, would grab a fly swat, and if he saw a fly he would rise to kill it.

And Eduardo Anguita also visited there. Leopoldo Castedo also visited some time and he relates it in his memoirs. Anguita had a great sense of humour; I remember that we slept in the same room as he; at night we would talk for hours about David Herbert Lawrence: Lady Chatterley's Lover.

Those were the books in fashion at the time. Vicente Huidobro and Eduardo Anguita had a great sense of humour. Thus when the countryman who was the estate manager arrived, they would sit him at the table with his hat on. Vicente Huidobro would say to Anguita: 'Look at those beautiful red carnations in that vase!' and Anguita would reply: 'But, why, Vicente, they are blue roses'; at which point the countryman would say, 'Gentlemen, how can that be, those are not roses, they are white petunias!' Anguita, right off the bat, would say to Huidobro: 'The problem is that your sight is failing, and you need to have your eyes examined'. The countryman would stand up, furious, and say 'These gentlemen are nuts'.

In 1938 you published an anthology titled, El Verdadero Cuento en Chile [The True Short Story in Chile], where Juan Emar was published for the first time and where, in addition,
you developed in the preface a very curious theme—I am referring to the impact the Andean mountain range has on Chileans.

It was because by then we were already getting together to dream about the mountain giants that were inside the mountain, because this had been a country inhabited by giants. The mountain is sacred. Back then the mountain could be seen at all hours. It was a marvel.

The view of the Andean Mountain Range that Santiago enjoys is not enjoyed in any other part of Chile. Only in Austria have I seen something similar. It was for something that Pedro de Valdivia chose this city as a mysterious centre. I know that in the mountain there are beings who dwell there, who come out, who contemplate, who are, who look at us. The idea of the Antología del Verdadero Cuento en Chile came to me because our people wrote short stories, especially Barreto; with it I wanted to leave a testimony to our generation. I included Juan Emar because his short stories were truly extraordinary, something unique in the world.

Vicente Huidobro never forgave me for not including him. That anthology has a history. I did not have a penny to publish it. I can’t remember how it came out. The anthology was published and it was a public scandal. Alone spoke on the radio and said that it was like a football team with eleven writers.

Talk to me about your experiences in the Himalayas and of those alleged subterranean cities that you assure us exist.

There exists a legend in which cities are built inside the Himalayas in order to protect against future catastrophes. But there is another interpretation, in which the subterranean cities existed from before. The earth is hollow and has different entrances, in different places.

Entrances existed in the Poles. In the South Pole and in the North Pole, and also in some mountains, and that is what I sought in the Himalayas; the entrances to the inner world. As one approaches the Pole, the temperature is higher and not lower and there is
pollen, often on the icebergs, which are made out of fresh water. It was to Admiral Byrd that strange things happened.

On his journey by the Pole he encountered a totally different world: prehistorical animals, rivers, and tropical vegetation. Admiral Byrd, it seems, was assassinated, for he was saying things that they did not want to be revealed. When he launched that military operation towards the Polar regions, in Antarctica (the Weddell Sea, Queen Maud Land), where the Germans of the Third Reich mounted expeditions and found warm water oases and, in addition, underground corridors thousands of years old. What it’s said is that from 1938 they started to supply that Antarctic base.

Admiral Byrd’s expedition went from 1946 to 1947, after the war, with aeroplanes and it’s believed that even with an atomic bomb that he dropped and exploded in mid air, causing many people to be lost. It would be the one responsible for the hole in the ozone layer.

You were friends with Hermann Hesse, with Carl Gustav Jung, with Ezra Pound, among other notable personages for the 20th century. Tell us about your experiences with them.

In Chile we came to know Hermann Hesse when he was, except in Germany, unknown in the world. We read him shortly after the end of the Second Great War, when he had yet to be awarded the Nobel Prize. With time Hesse would come to be used politically, fortunately for him after his death, coming to be a literary boom, promoted at will.

I lived Hermann Hesse’s magic work to the extreme of wanting to travel to Europe so as to meet him personally. That adventure is related by me in my book, C. G. Jung and Hermann Hesse: A Record of Two Friendships, and I will not repeat it here. So many things! So many memories! With him I talked about everything, even about death. One day I asked him: ‘Is there something beyond death?’ He replied: ‘To die is like going to Jung’s Collective Unconscious, in order to, from there, return to the forms, to the forms’. I have to think: what connected us, perhaps a past reincarnation? There is no way to explain that mystery. We were separated by age, geographic distance, history: everything and nothing.
Much the same took place with Professor Carl Gustav Jung, to the extreme that that universal monument, that giant, gave me—me, a young writer, lost in the world, from a distant and unknown country—a preface for my book The Visits of the Queen of Sheba.

And that was the only time, in his long life, that that extraordinary genius wrote a preface for a purely literary work, for a prose poem, as is my book. And here I would like to reflect on a matter that has something to do with our fatherland, with Chile.

No one in this country has been capable of valuing this extraordinary fact, nor rejoice, nor take pride. I, a Chilean, recognised by the most important man in the world of intellect and of thought in the 20th century, and perhaps of many centuries more, was prefaced and admired by that being. It is envy, cowardice, that in Chile, my own fatherland, prevents the official, intellectual, and literary world from accepting and recognising those facts. In contrast, C. G. Jung’s most important biographer, Gerard Wehr, wrote in his book that ‘towards the end of his days, Professor Jung did not receive visitors, nor his disciples, nor many members of his family, except a young Chilean writer, for whom he prefaced a book and with whom he conversed about things that he had never previously revealed.’

With regards to my deep friendship with Ezra Pound, it also had to do with our thinking the same way. Fortunately I was not interned in an insane asylum like him and the other marvellous Norwegian writer and Nobel Prize winner, Knut Hamsun. And Ezra Pound is the greatest poet of the 20th century and will be of the 21st century. I am happy in his company, and I need nothing nor anybody else.

The only monument that in the world was erected in honour of Ezra Pound was launched and inaugurated by myself in Spain, in the peaks of the city of Medinaceli.

What is your present life?

My life oscillates between Santiago and Valparaiso and I keep looking at Huelén Hill like my ancestors, until I too find the ‘secret entrances’ to Plato’s inner world, to the ‘Other Earth’. Or until I too am taken away by a Flying Saucer, a UFO, a Vimana.