



ASHLEIGH BRILLIANT

America's No.1 Epigrammatist

BY HANIA JURDAK

To introduce him as either a writer or a philosopher would not do him justice, for he is both, but to introduce him as a writer/philosopher would not be sufficient, for that would fail to recognize the humor in his work, and to describe him as a humorist would be to miss the serious intent of his words and the healing power of his work.

He is, quite simply, Ashleigh Brilliant, America's no.1 epigrammatist, creator of 10,000 epigrams. Interviewed by CNN and CBS Cable and profiled by The Wall Street Journal and People magazine, Brilliant has written words that have been widely syndicated, appearing in newspapers across the United States since 1975, as well as on millions of items, words that someone else could have said, but never did, until Brilliant came along.

Pot-Shots reproduced with permission from Ashleigh Brilliant.

It's a new and unique literary form that Brilliant's illustrated one-liners (called "Brilliant Thoughts" or "Pot-Shots") introduce, a literary form pursued with great dedication over several decades. Originally conceived by coincidence, this form had come to being following Brilliant's first painting exhibit, when his painting titles, rather than the paintings themselves, seized the most attention. Over the years, Brilliant has collected his "Pot-Shots" in several books taking some of his epigrams as titles. Apart from the pleasure these "Pot-Shots" yield, they impart insight - in distilled form. That's because they're the product of well-defined, self-set content and structure restraints: they must hold timelessly true and must be translatable; each must be non-

rhyiming and must consist of 17 words or less (17 being the number of syllables in Japanese haiku).

Perhaps Brilliant's epigrams sound familiar because they capture essential observations about reality and the human condition. Yet beware - just because these quotes are quotable, doesn't mean they're public property. Brilliant's epigrams are copyrighted and need to be licensed for use. They are here reproduced with permission directly from Ashleigh Brilliant, who has granted Cedar Wings this exclusive interview. We wanted to give MEA readers the chance to meet this creative genius up close, so we asked him some honest questions, and here were his honest answers...

Q: If you could change the world right now, what would you do?

A: I would start by trying to improve the part of it called "me."



Q: Do you feel at peace with or at odds with human nature? Or do you feel this question is a contradiction-in-terms?

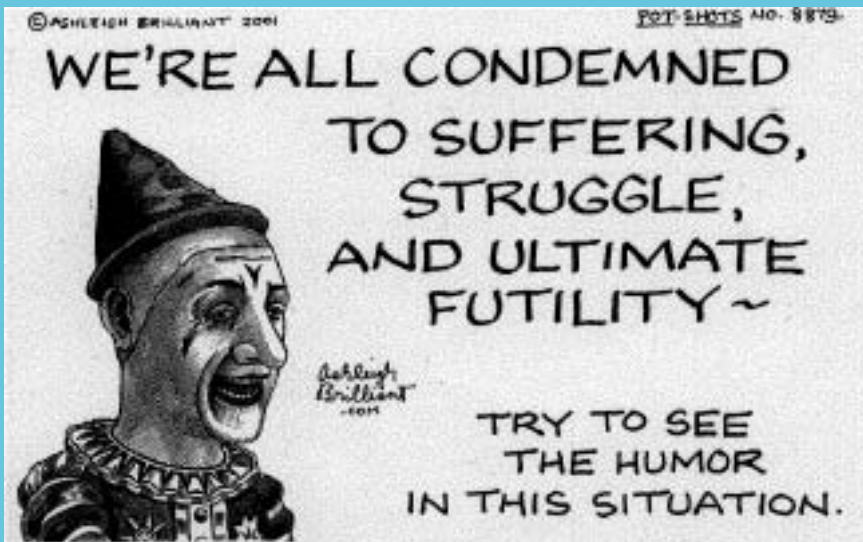
A: We must all make our peace with human nature, since it has the upper hand.



Q: Among the below, which do you think is the primary obstacle to human development, and why?

- Violence
- Bias
- Fear
- Arrogance

A: Violence, bias, and even arrogance all arise primarily out of fear.



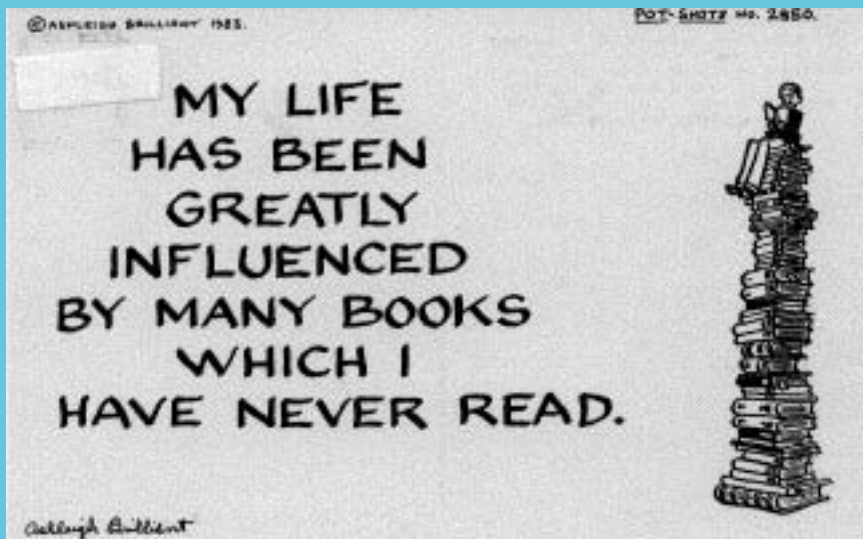
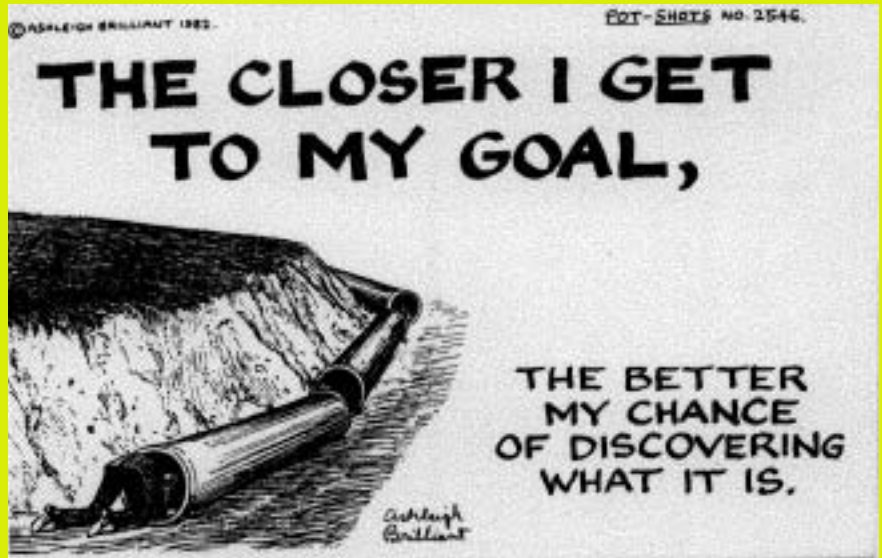
Q: What do you think is the essence of humor, and would you say the world's taste is developing toward a darker sense of humor (as the human race continues to devise new ways of destroying itself, the Earth, and its creatures)?

A: The essence of humor is incongruity. I think it is good that we are finding ways to benefit by laughing at things which have not always been considered funny.

Literature

Q: Following your long and ongoing career, do you feel you've achieved your goal? What would you say your goal has been? Is there anything you wish you had done differently?

A: My ultimate career goal is the Nobel Prize for Literature. I can only hope that being in *Cedar Wings Magazine* will somehow bring me a little closer to it. I did have a goal of publishing 10,000 superb illustrated epigrams. This was achieved recently, and they are now all available on a single CD. I am not prone to regrets. I wish I had been a better son, brother, and husband. But I also wish I could stop wishing that.

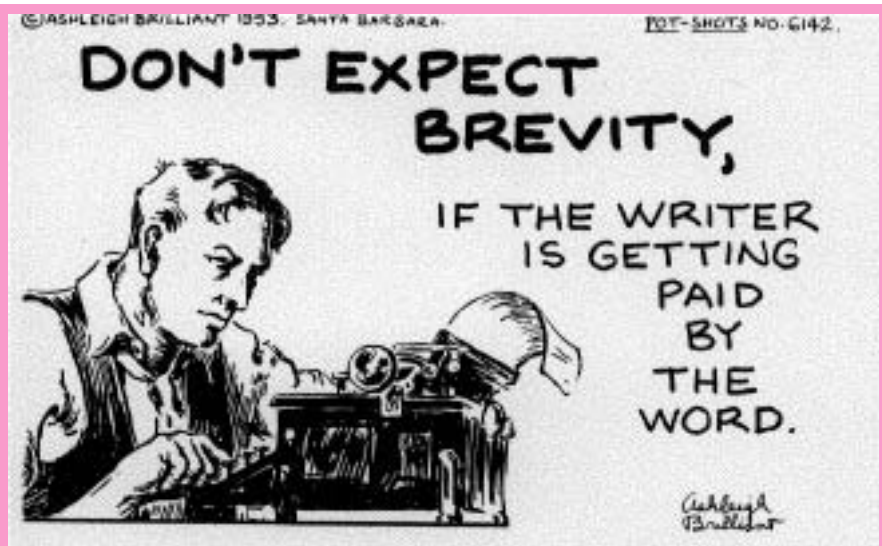


Q: Would you tell me a bit about your early experience with the epigram and which writers/philosophers served as inspiration?

A: During my 30's, in the 1960's, it occurred to me that very short writing was a literary area worth exploring. I have been most influenced by two anonymous schools of writing: (1) the creators of commercial advertising and (2) the people who write on walls.

Q: Being an epigrammatist, what do you think when you behold a 600-page novel? Do you think: 'That writer is patient!' or do you think: 'That writer is writing just to be read, not to be memorized?'

A: I greatly admire the skill of a good novelist, but regardless of whether you are writing a novel or an epigram, the ideal is that everything unnecessary should be left out.



Literature

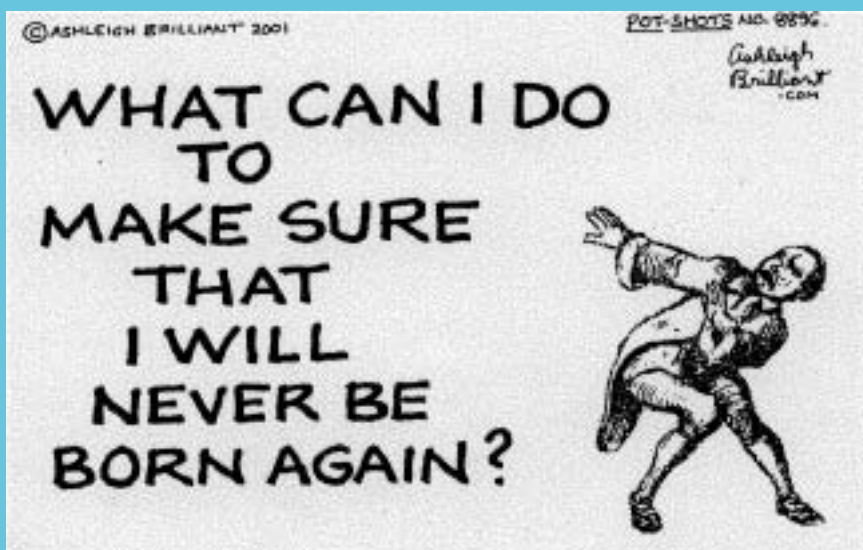
Q: All in all, how many epigrams have you written to date?

A: I have published exactly 10,000.



Q: In few words, what do you think most distinguishes the 'Brilliant style'?

A: A combination of originality, humor, and insight.



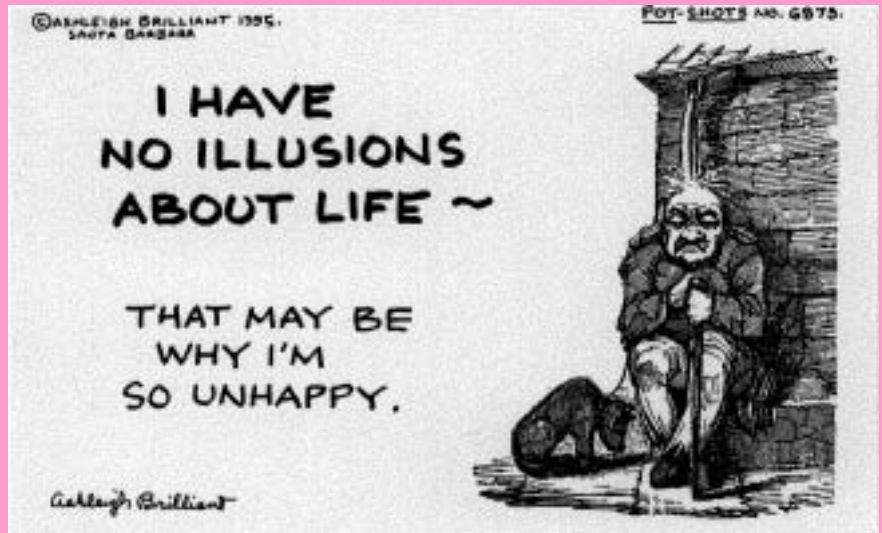
Q: If you were to be reborn on this planet in another form, what would that be and why?

A: Any cat owned by my wife - each one is always guaranteed a wonderful life.

Literature

Q: Do you consider yourself more of a hardcore realist, a positive thinker, or both?

A: Definitely a realist rather than a positive thinker (alas!).



Q: Would you like to add anything else?

A: Thank you!



About Ashleigh Brilliant...

One of the world's most quoted living authors, Ashleigh Brilliant was born in London, England, in 1933 and emigrated to the US in 1956. After having graduated with honors from the University of London with a B.A. in 1955, he earned his M.A. at Claremont Graduate School in 1957 and his PhD from the University of

California, Berkeley in 1964. He started doing Pot-Shots in 1967, and in 1968, married Dorothy Low Tucker (who became vice-president of Brilliant Enterprises). Brilliant became a naturalized US citizen in 1969. He is member of several associations and winner of several honorary awards. Today, Brilliant

Enterprises still operates, as it has since 1973, out of a little house in Santa Barbara, California. Apart from continuing to create new Pot-Shots, Brilliant's current interest is maintaining and developing his official website at www.ashleighbrilliant.com.