is among the most innovative in the field of contemporary book arts.

Unlike the *Amphora* now in your hands, William Kotzwinkle's first adult novel in a decade is a fast-paced space opera, complete with such science fiction staples as spaceships, robots, laser guns and aliens set against a backdrop of good versus evil.

The Amphora Project of the title is a project controlled by the "Consortium," a cabal of the 12 richest and most powerful individuals on Planet Immortal. Hidden deep within an orbiting salvage yard known as the Junk Moon, the project moves forward with clues left by the supposedly benevolent "Ancient Aliens." The project promises to give the key to immortality; instead, it is a trap set by predatory aliens from another dimension.

The introverted entomologist Adrian Link is the hero of the story. Link comes to discover the true destructive power of the Amphora Project after becoming involved with the space pirate Jockey Oldcastle, who initiates him and his companion robot, Upquark, into a plot to infiltrate the Amphora Project. Oldcastle and his companions, however, find nothing but danger in the project laboratory. People begin to die, their bodies transformed into crystal. Several groups of characters work to counter the wave of destruction the Amphora Project creates, including the Controller, a young woman who sits at the centre of a panoptic surveillance system on Planet Immortal; Oldcastle and his lizard-like companion Lizardo; and Link and his exotic love interest, Ren. In the end, Link saves the day by working out that the Amphora Project does not store up the sought-after life-force, but lets malevolent aliens steal said life-force for their own purposes.

Kotzwinkle, best known for penning the novel version of the movie *E.T.,* delivers an entertaining novel in *The Amphora Project*—at least if you enjoy quirky science fiction in the vein of Douglas Adams' *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* or Spider Robinson's *Time Travelers Strictly Cash.* For the most part, however, it uncritically presents a social landscape based on contemporary North America. Although Kotzwinkle hints at larger issues such as widespread surveillance and the efficiency of capital punishment for those in power, *The Amphora Project* fails to challenge normative expectations in the way high-quality space operas can (such as those by Charles Stross or Iain M. Banks). The pacing and narrative twists and turns add excitement, but also add to the feeling that this novel is somewhat rushed and unpolished.

Like the story itself, the design of *The Amphora Project* is functional, if unremarkable. There is no note on the book's design or the type used (a serif font perhaps of the Times family); still, design elements do not detract from the enjoyment of the text.

The Amphora Project succeeds, if it succeeds at all, primarily as a beach book. The fast-paced plot, with its many changes in direction and perspective, will keep fans of the genre turning its pages, at least if they can manage to sustain their willing suspension of belief through more than one unlikely *deus ex machina.* The story resolves happily, with the requisite romantic pairing. Most readers who finish the book will be satisfied with this conclusion; others will be lucky to have made it past page 50.

This slim portfolio of curiosities has as much fun with the idiosyncrasies of the English language as it does with the ways design can play with words to make—or undermine—their meanings. For newcomers to English, such as author Teresa Monachino's mother, it also highlights how words can fail those whom they're intended to serve.

Monachino dedicates *Words Fail Me* to her mother, to whom she found herself regularly attempting "to explain the often extreme differences in meaning between similar-looking words." For those who know the language, however, Monachino's presentation of each example reveals the potential for the language to betray itself.

Monachino arranges her examples in seven sections, including Contradictionary, a collection of words at odds with their meanings; Antigrams, words whose letters are rearranged into words that mean the opposite of the original; Ambtexterity, a collection of heteronyms; Pleonasties, two-word phrases where one word was sufficient; Antagonyms, words that look and sound the same but have opposing meanings;