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;

Oxycretins, words whose meanings change when a letter is removed; and *(sic)* Note, a collection of unfortunate line breaks that subvert the meaning of sentences.

Some of the examples Monachino, a graphic designer, provides invite a deeper consideration of the errors that too often creep into texts and undermine them in the age of personal computing. What are we really thinking when we mistype "united" as "untied," an entry in the Antigrams chapter? Somewhat appropriately, she takes as an epigraph for the book that familiar bit of light verse poking fun at the inability of computers to preserve us from all manner of textual error:

I have a spell cheque function
It came with my PC
It plainly marques for my revue
Mistakes I cannot sea.

Beyond the humour, which will delight word enthusiasts and proofreaders alike, *Words Fail Me* is a gallery of design. A palette of red, white and black and Eric Gill's typefaces Gill Sans and Joanna are the tools she uses to illustrate her points, such as the heteronymical character of "wind," the dot of the i swept across the page, and "wind," which repeats into a spiral pattern.

While some of the examples are mere sight gags, all receive careful attention in their presentation.

Other examples require care in their design, as the examples of unfortunate line breaks in the final section show. Monachino follows in the footsteps of Lynn Truss's best-selling *Eats, Shoots and Leaves* (2004), referenced in the current book's promotional material, in warning against the danger of poor punctuation as well as poor design that can inadvertently allow words to say what they never intended.

In that regard, this book is not so much a miscellany of linguistic curiosities and design as it is a gift to those discovering the potential of the English language to simultaneously amuse and confuse.

ARTISTS' BOOKS

A new collection of poems by Yves Peyré

IN ADDITION TO his poetry, the Frenchman Yves Peyré has written an extensive history of French *livres d'artistes* from the 1870s to the end of the last century. *An Intimate Cosmogony/Cosmogonie Intime,* his new collaboration with Felicia Rice's Moving Parts Press, reflects his knowledge and passion for this tradition, collaborating to create an "example of what can happen when poet and painter, bookbinder and printer all share a vision that draws in equal parts on the sensual and the cerebral, the visual and the verbal."

The book consists of five poems forming a sequence, printed in both the original French and in English translations by Elizabeth Jackson. At Peyré's request, the illustrator chosen to collaborate was Rice's father, Ray, an established West Coast artist and filmmaker. Sadly, it was to be his last project (he died in 2001), but he lived long enough to complete 17 drawings for the book, and even hand coloured a deluxe issue of 12 copies. The remaining copies in the edition of 96 had the illustrations coloured by pochoir.

An Intimate Cosmogony was digitally set, with the two languages and long, narrow columns of coloured illustrations mirroring each other across a spread, and printed from polymer plates. The sheets are collected in an accordion structure (10 x 15 inches) that stretches to 18 feet. The text block is held in a printed paper cover, in a slipcase and box. The price is US$2,400 ($4,800 for one of the deluxe hand-painted copies). For details see www.movingpartspress.com.