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-- Acknowledgments

Sommario/riassunto

A lapsed religion still emits / faint signals; God, / in his satellite dish, / groans / moving on. To seek belonging, to strain against the familiar – these are the polarities many of us live between, feeling the pull of each desire. Offering a particular history, an intimate vantage point from within the various kingdoms we inhabit, Julie Paul's *The Rules of the Kingdom* is an exploration of this struggle on a personal level and a universal one. Broken into five sections, the book examines the human struggle to find meaning, comfort, and a sense of home. In "Settlers' Descendant Reclaims the Past," the poems consider rural life, both the specific and the collective, including a village's destruction by fire. In "Weight of the Word" the focus turns to family of origin, religion, and rites of passage. Poems take a familial tack again in "Cleavage," wherein Paul dives into the waters of motherhood, and they drift into further intimacy in "The World's Smallest Republic," a series of poems about sex, love, and marriage. Finally, the poems in the fifth section, "Next Time the World Will Burn," explore our place in the twenty-first century and offer some idiosyncratic suggestions on how to live. At turns humorous, playful, contemplative, and coy, the poems in *The Rules of the Kingdom* question the vagaries of faith and family but ultimately celebrate life and love.