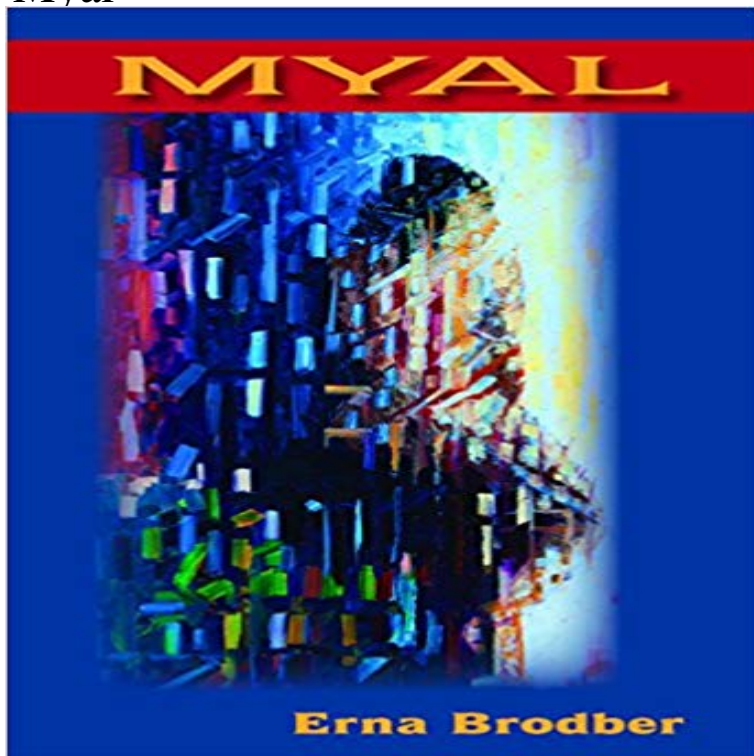


Myal



Jamaican-born novelist and sociologist Erna Brodber describes Myal as an exploration of the links between the way of life forged by the people of two points of the black diaspora—the Afro-Americans and the Afro-Jamaicans. Operating on many literary levels thematically, linguistically, stylistically it is the story of women's cultural and spiritual struggle in colonial Jamaica. The novel opens at the beginning of the 20th century with a community gathering to heal the mysterious illness of a young woman, Ella, who has returned to Jamaica after an unsuccessful marriage abroad. The Afro-Jamaican religion myal, which asserts that good has the power to conquer all, is invoked to heal Ella, who has been left zombified and devoid of any black soul. Ella, who is light skinned enough to pass for white, has suffered a breakdown after her white American husband produced a black-face minstrel show based on the stories of her village and childhood. This cultural appropriation is one of a series Ella encountered in her life, and parallels the ongoing theft of the labor and culture of colonized peoples for imperial gain and pleasure. The novel's rich, vivid language and vital characters earned it the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Canada and the Caribbean.

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