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Underwritten

Underwritten contemplates the language of earth's beauty. As earthlings we humans have things upside down. When we think of the sacred we look up. Earth underwrites flesh and a more-than-human-dream we share with a cloud and the archetypal worm (earthworm, larval stage of insects, silkworm, and serpent). Like a lot of insurers these days clouds and worms show signs of strain from our civilization's thinking about nature and may no longer be able to accept liability for damages.

We don't know secrets of the worm or cloud or their knowledge, if they have it. But we have clues about a possible language: grammars written on trees by worm bodies and alphabets for different geographic areas. Maybe our sensory imagination reads such a language. We look for elephants or anthropomorphic beings in cloud shapes, but maybe if we changed perspective there are worms, serpents or maggots in the clouds as well. And maybe care of the soil by the five-hearted earthworm includes rituals and celebration. We really don't know.

Underwritten explores ideas of worm and cloud using cloth, some of it harvested from silkworms and some from pineapples, using techniques of screen printing with dye; collage of cloth to paper and cloth to wood with methyl cellulose; machine and hand-quilting; casting of silk and plaster. The collages on paper and larch and the silk-cast worms are achieved using methylcellulose, which does not change the "hand" or cloth-y feel. The acrylic worms were fabricated according to my specifications.

Underwritten results from imaginative contemplation of two texts. One is *The Formation of Vegetable Mould Through the Action of Worms* by Charles Darwin, his last published book and result of life-long research. The other is *The Cloud of Unknowing*, an anonymous, fourteenth-century, mystical, text based on negative or apophatic theology (what we don't know about God).