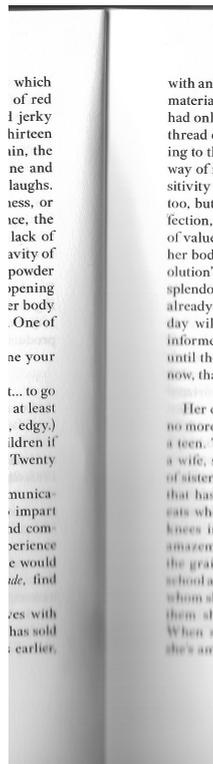


5 JANUARY



And then there is the shadow, the lack of clarity, in which words may only be read in parts, their edges muted and smudged, not entirely unintelligible but one must have the patience. That is like the act of placing letters in a box, keeping them sealed. They are there to be read, if only, if only. I did write that I would return to the letters. I had failed to notice that two envelopes were depicted: opened and empty, sealed, or not quite sealed for there was a ragged tear on the left of the enclosure. Possibilities were mentioned in a few lines typed across the top of the seal, where one might usually have expected to find an address. Certainly (I am certain), this was an address. On the back on an envelope: a small thought. This was like a small script, which led to my vague thoughts about Robert Walser, who had been more present of late. He wrote to his editor that his writing was overcome with a swoon, a cramp, a stupor. This was both physical and mental. He could only overcome the block of writing he faced by his pencil method, which permitted him to scribble, to fiddle about, to play (though I had never felt him to be entirely playful, such a miniaturist, weightless, who must be read in detail). He wrote on scrap paper, on receipts and business cards. He did not refuse to leave the building; unlike *Bartleby*, he took long walks, sometimes with his friend, the editor, Carl Seelig, talking, for example, about beer and twilight. He died alone, left arm stretched out, right hand on his chest, that dead man who lay on a snowy slope. His hat lay nearby. There was an echo of his first novel, in which a poet died in the snow. Oddly, it had started to snow this afternoon as I read about the kinds of space artists (these artists) inhabit, their rooms, their houses. The snow did not settle. They spoke of dens, of building and play.