We will never realize quite clearly enough what a shameful thing death is. In the end, we never try to fight it head on; doctors and scientists merely establish a pact with it, they fight on points of detail, they slow it down by a few months, a few years, but it all amounts to nothing. What we need to do is attack the roots of the problem in a big collective effort in which each of us will work towards his own survival and everyone else's.

That's why – because one of us has to give an example – I decided to harness myself to the project that's been close to my heart for a long time: preserving oneself whole, keeping a trace of all the moments of our lives, all the objects that have surrounded us, everything we've said and what's been said around us, that's my goal. The task is vast, and my means are frail. Why didn't I start before? Almost everything dealing with the period that I first set about saving (6 September 1944 to 24 July 1950) has been lost, thrown away, through culpable negligence. It was only with infinite difficulty that I was able to find the few elements that I am presenting here. To prove their authenticity, to situate them precisely, all this has been possible only as the result of ceaseless questioning and minutely detailed research.

But the effort still to be made is great. So many years will be spent searching, studying, classifying, before my life is secured, carefully arranged and labelled in a safe place – secure against theft, fire and nuclear war – from whence it will be possible to take it out and assemble it at any point. Then, being thus assured of never dying, I may finally rest.