

Introduction— 1912

Hunter Hensley 2017

In this year, Martha struggles with her identity as two of the previous anchors of her identity, her husband and her matriarchal role to the family, have been removed from her life. Because of this her tone has shifted to reflect her search for a stable identity. This search can be found in the focuses in her entries, Martha always notes what Edith did rarely what she herself has done that day. Edith replaced Martha's role as the mother of the house. Many times throughout these entries Martha mentions how her knee has prevented her from moving to the point where she even says that she is "helpless without crutches"(3rd October). Martha feels trapped in a house filled with people busily attending to the errands of the day that she used to be responsible for. Martha's feeling of identity loss is compounded after James dies as she says, "Death never appeared to me as it did to night. You could almost see this world receding and the other world so near that it seemed but a step across" (8th October). Despite these struggles Martha forged an identity as a mother and a grandmother.

On the last day of October Martha writes that "I felt all broken up this evening to know...that all the children are gone. But then clayton is left...and Edith and Rankin...for they add to my happiness."(29th October) Martha possesses a strength to be able to face the death of her husband and still be sound in her identity. In our modern world with people spending years searching for a glimpse of who they are, Martha stands as an example of how someone can claim an identity in the overlooked aspects of life such as motherhood. Martha's life has many moments that are filled with sorrow: Paul's death, the death of the unnamed baby, and especially

James's death. However even with all of this death, Martha still stands as a woman, firmly grounded in her identity.