

SATANSTOE; OR, BY PLAYING THE DEVIL, HOW TO TURN HISTORY UPSIDE DOWN

BY NORMAN BARRY

I. *SATANSTOE*,
OR
HOW TO GRADUATE FROM NASSAU HALL

Satanstoe was published in June 1845. This novel exhibits marked autobiographical features with regard to the choice of the college the protagonist, Cornelius Littlepage, should attend.

It should be pointed out that autobiographical forays can be seen as early as the first *Leatherstocking Tale*, *The Pioneers*, Cooper's third novel, written in 1823, in the person of Judge Temple (Cooper's own father was also a judge and founder of a new settlement). Judge Temple's settlement, Templeton, is an obvious re-creation of Cooperstown. [1].

It is general knowledge that Cooper attended Yale in New Haven, Connecticut, for three years from 1802 to 1805 [2], but, being the youngest of his class and exceptionally well-prepared, he spent much of his time in play [3] rather than study. Young Cooper's undoing was his decision to use gunpowder to blow open the door of a rival's room [4]. Although successful in demolishing the door and giving his adversary a proper scare, the punishment was expulsion. He was in his junior year and only fifteen years of age.

In *Satanstoe*, the first-person protagonist, a fourteen-year-old youth named Cornelius ("Corny") Littlepage, looks on rather passively as his elders ponder whether he should be sent to Yale in Connecticut or to Nassau Hall (later called Princeton after relocating in 1756) in Newark, New Jersey.

As it turns out, the lucky boy will be sent to the college he had always wanted to attend, where he will enjoy four "happy years" and receive his degree "with honors." The delicious autobiographical inversion of facts becomes very amusing in the following passage:

"My four college years were very happy years. The vacations came often, and I went home invariably, passing a day or two with my aunt Legge, in going or coming. The acquisition of knowledge was always agreeable to me, and I may say it without vanity I trust at this time of life, I got the third honour of my class. We should have graduated four, but one of our class was compelled to quit at the end of Junior year, on account of his health. He was an unusually hard student, and it was generally admitted that he would have taken the first honour had he remained."

(*SATCE*, Ch. III, pp. 36-37)

The question the critical reader can pose at this juncture, is whether the pros and cons of Yale (in New Haven) versus Nassau Hall (in Newark), as expressed in *Satanstoe*, published in June of 1845, might not reflect upon a debate over the same issue back in 1801, forty-four years earlier, which led to the *wrong choice*. It was at that time that James' elder brother William was expelled from Princeton, a cataclysmic event over which young James had absolutely no control. The scandal and ignominy resulting precluded sending James Cooper to the same institution. [5]

Of interest is how *Satanstoe* disposes of this wayward brother and how Corny (alias Cooper) receives his parents' undivided attention:

“I [=Cornelius/Corny Littlepage] was neither an only child, nor the eldest born. There was a son who preceded me, and two daughters succeeded, but they all died in infancy, leaving me in effect the only offspring for my parents to cherish and educate.” (SAT CE, Ch. I, p. 12)

Instead of an elder brother blocking Cooper’s (or Corny’s) chances, we discover in *Satanstoe* Dirck Follock, a friend and distant relation, who is to be sent with Corny to Nassau Hall (Princeton). Corny is fifteen, William’s age when sent to Princeton; and Dirck, fourteen:

“You [=Col. Follock] will send Dirck there, too,” my father added, as soon as the affair in my case, was finally determined. “It would be a pity to separate the boys, after they have been so long together, and have got to be so much used to each other. Their characters are so identical, too, that they are more like brothers than very distant relatives.”

“Dey will like one anot’er all de petter for pein’ a little tifferent, den,” answered the Colonel, drily.

Dirck and I were no more alike, than a horse resembles a mule.
(SAT CE, Ch.II, p. 27)

The humorous concluding sentence may also be regarded as a comparison between William and James.^[6]

The “message” in *Satanstoe* would then read, “I (James Fenimore-Cooper), in the person of Cornelius Littlepage, have *rewritten the history* of my college education (and have allowed myself the literary license of “streamlining” my family) so that you can see, dear parents, what would have made me happy and led to the successful completion of my formal education.” The account in *Satanstoe* thus consists of counterfactual events used to illustrate a point: the feeling that what went wrong in Connecticut could not have happened in New Jersey, the need to *rewrite* the story to show *what should have happened, given a more perfect world*. “*The Helmsman of Lake Erie*” works with counterfactuals and is in effect history written as it *ought to be*. Although, for example, distance and location are all a fabrication in *Satanstoe*, the attempt to show what *could have happened* by rearranging the preconditions on a literary level reflects the very same genre of writing that is to be found in “The Helmsman.”

II.

MELANCTHON TAYLOR WOOLSEY AND GUERT TEN EYCK: TWO DAREDEVILS IN *SATANSTOE*

After the abrupt end to his college education, young Cooper had gone to sea in a merchant ship. Two years later, he was to become a midshipman on Lake Ontario. It was there, at the harbor of Oswego on the south shore of Lake Ontario, that Cooper was to encounter his young commanding officer, the dashing twenty-seven-year-old Lieutenant Melancthon Taylor Woolsey. First, a new brig christened the *Oneida* was built to fortify American defenses against the British on the lake. Then, “late in June, 1809 ^[7],” Cooper, not yet twenty, and his commanding officer embarked, not on a “marine campaign,” as Cooper’s daughter tactfully related years later, but on a pleasure trip to Niagara Falls. What is abundantly clear from Susan

Fenimore Cooper's remarks is that "the young midshipman from the Otsego Hills" had the time of his life:

"In the year 1808, several young officers of the navy, under the command of Lieutenant Woolsey, were ordered from New York to the shores of Lake Ontario, for the purpose of building a small vessel-of-war. Among these officers was Mr. Cooper, then a midshipman in the service. Their road beyond Utica lay for many a mile through the forest, the whole region to the northward of the Mohawk having scarcely yet thrown off the character of a wilderness. The mouth of the Oswego River was their destination; here they remained for some time, until the Oneida, a brig mounting sixteen guns, was built and launched. *The whole party enjoyed extremely this marine campaign, with its wild coloring of frontier life, and none more so than the young midshipman from the Otsego Hills.* [My emphasis] During leisure hours, they roamed through the forest, or explored the shores of the lake. On one occasion they were ordered to Buffalo; they went by land through what is now the heart of a populous country but was then a wilderness."

- Susan Fenimore Cooper, *Pages and Pictures from the Writings of James Fenimore Cooper*, with Notes by Susan Fenimore Cooper (New York: W.A. Townsend and Co., 1861), p. 308.

In January 1845, *Graham's Magazine* put out a biography of Melancthon Taylor Woolsey written by Cooper. The article was later integrated into Cooper's *Naval Biography*, published under the title *Lives of Distinguished American Naval Officers* in 1846.

Who was Woolsey? Cooper often began a biography with a consideration of parentage. Woolsey's mother was "a lady of the well-known family of Livingston, and a daughter of a divine of eminence." [8] The Livingstons and the Rensselaers held vast estates and were attacked by the so-called "Anti-Renters" in the conflict between owners of large tracts of land and their tenants in New York state in the mid-1840's. This conflict served as the background to *The Littlepage Manuscripts*, a trilogy of which *Satanstoe* was the first – and from a literary standpoint, the very best – installment. On January 22nd, 1845, Cooper wrote to the publisher Richard Bentley that *Satanstoe* "is now far advanced and will go to press in a few days." [9]

Woolsey's father, Melancthon L. Woolsey, was a collector of Plattsburg, on Lake Champlain. Plattsburg (now spelled with an "h" at the end) was famous as the scene of the Battle of Plattsburg Bay in 1814, a signal victory for Americans in the War of 1812, which rendered British claims to exclusive control of the Great Lakes vacuous while guaranteeing the young Republic exclusive control of Lake Champlain. As late as October 30, 1845, Cooper was willing to give an "extempore address on the Battle of Plattsburg Bay, or the Forty Days before Tripoli, or the Battle of Lake Erie." [10]

The nearly simultaneous completion of both the article on Woolsey in *Graham's Magazine* and of the novel *Satanstoe*, together with the obvious fact that Woolsey represented an important chapter in young Cooper's "rites of passage," must awaken suspicions that the strongly autobiographical *Satanstoe* might contain the "ghost of Woolsey" lurking in its pages. [11] The references which follow are aimed to illustrate the family resemblance between the major hero of *Satanstoe*, Guert Ten Eyck, and young Cooper's commanding officer on Lake Ontario, Melancthon L. Woolsey. Parallels between a novel by Cooper and the Lake Ontario excursion with Woolsey to Niagara Falls have already been documented:

“It was this tough progress up the lake [=Lake Ontario] that formed the ultimate basis of the long run of Jasper Western’s cutter, the *Scud*, back along the ‘outline of unbroken forest’ fringing the Ontario shore in *The Pathfinder*....”

– Wayne Franklin, *James Fenimore Cooper: The Early Years*, p. 120.

That his youthful impressions during the 1809 voyage on Lake Ontario, with his visit to the “Cataract,” as the Falls were often called, had left their mark, and were revived in even greater glory much later in life, is suggested by his daughter Susan:

On this expedition Mr. Cooper saw Niagara for the first time. He was struck with the grandeur of the cataract; but he felt its sublime character far more deeply at a later day [12], when visiting the same ground, after his return from Europe.

Susan Fenimore Cooper, *Pages and Pictures from the Writings of James Fenimore Cooper*, p. 309.

The undisputed giant of *Satanstoe* is Guert Ten Eyck, who is portrayed as twenty-five years old, four years Corny Littlepage’s senior. In 1809, young Cooper was not quite twenty, and his commanding officer was all of twenty-seven. Deep bonds of friendship developed both in *Satanstoe* between Corny and Guert, as was also the case with young Cooper and Melancthon in the years 1808 to 1809. That both Guert and Melancthon were both manly, out-going, fun-loving and up to innocent mischief (as was young Cooper) explains in part their enormous popularity and the fact that they could evoke a strong sense of devotion and admiration in their friends.

In *Lives*, Cooper wrote (no doubt with a reminiscing smile):

“In that day, lieutenants were frequently very young men, and it sometimes happened that their frolics partook more of the levity of youth than is now apt to occur, in officers of rank.” – *Lives*, Vol. II, “Melancthon Taylor Woolsey,” pp. 120-121

Just as Woolsey could claim illustrious parentage linked to the Anti-Rent conflict, Guert, too, was not of humble origins:

“When it was through, the oldest of the Dutchmen – a fine, daredevil, roystering fellow of four or five-and-twenty, whose dress and mien, however denoted a person of the upper class....” *Satanstoe* (Cooper Edition), Ch. XI, p. 152

An amazing aspect of the fictional character of Guert Ten Eyck is the features shared with Cooper’s non-fictional “comrade in arms,” Melancthon Taylor Woolsey. Apart from Woolsey’s parentage with links to Cooper’s obsession with the “Anti-Rent War,” and with the War of 1812 (Plattsburg), which secured the Great Lakes and Lake Champlain, their relative same age, the bonds of friendship, the admiration that the fictional character inspired in Corny, and Woolsey inspired in Cooper provide striking parallels.

Woolsey was “of an athletic frame and manly habits.” [13] Guert struck a positive note on Corny in the following passage – Corny’s unqualified admiration, Guert’s talents both as a soldier and a leader (a “Woolsey” backflash), and Guert’s own physical prowess are all lumped together:

“Guert marched next to the Indian, and I [=Corny] was third in line. How often, that busy day, did I gaze at my file-leader [=Guert], in admiration of his figure and mien!

Nature appeared to have intended him for a soldier. Although so powerful, his frame was agile – a particular in which he differed from Dirck....”

Satanstoe (Cooper Edition), Ch. XXIV, pp. 350-351

The tragic love story between Guert and Mary Wallace deserves mention. Guert is cut down in the prime of his manhood, leaving Mary, who has only been completely convinced of her love for Guert shortly before his death. She resolves to live the life of Guert’s widow, even though they never married:

“No, Anne, my fate is sealed for this world,” said Mary Wallace, “and I shall live Guert’s widow, as faithfully and devotedly, as if the marriage vow had been pronounced.”

Satanstoe (Cooper Edition), Ch. XXX, p. 440

Melanchthon Taylor Woolsey had already died in 1838. His widow is mentioned in the final paragraph of – shall we say? – Cooper’s eulogy of his old friend. Her fate does not sound much better than that of Mary Wallace:

“The widow of Com. Woolsey still lives. She has several children, and we regret to say, like those of her sex who survive the public servants of this country, she is left with few of the world’s goods to console her.”

Lives, Vol. II, p. 145

Interestingly, the highlights of Cooper’s article on Woolsey in *Graham’s Magazine*, and later in the Woolsey chapter in *Lives of Distinguished American Naval Officers*, have more to do with a series of anecdotes and adventures related by Cooper of his outing to Niagara Falls than with the actual career of Woolsey, who – Cooper morosely comments – “passed the flower of his days on Lake Ontario” [14] in relative isolation rather than advancing in his profession, as his capabilities so clearly warranted.

When relating his good times with Woolsey, Cooper breaks completely from the sober and rather monotonous style of, for example, his pedantically objective *Naval History*. Instead, the reader senses that Cooper is reliving some very important and happy moments of his early life in a style refreshingly similar to the best of Corny’s easy-going, chatty, unencumbered, first-person narration in *Satanstoe*, a style – it should be remembered – that the reader is often hard put to find in Cooper. Just as young Cooper was “at some foolery or other” when addressing a quack physician as “Hippocrates” simply to reveal the impostor’s ignorance of the name and all it stood for, or – another example, “drop[ping] snow-balls and other ‘cooling ingredients’ by means of the chimney, into the doctor’s mess” [15], so, too, Woolsey was also a daredevil, who achieved his greatest triumphs, not necessarily in naval combat but in procuring all the sumptuous ingredients for proper feasting:

“The living was excellent, salmon, bass, venison in season, rabbits, squirrels, wild-geese, ducks, &c., abounding. The mess, however, pronounced cranberries the staple commodity of the region. They were uniformly served three times a day, and with venison, ducks, &c., made a delicious accompaniment. Woolsey was a notable caterer, keeping his mess in abundance.” *Lives*, Vol. II, p. 128

Guert, too, applied his energies in the “culinary spirit” of Woolsey:

“Guert did little besides shoot and fish, keeping our larder well supplied with trout, pigeons, squirrels, and such other game as the season would allow, occasionally knocking over something in the shape of poor venison.”

Satanstoe (Cooper Edition), Ch. XXI, p. 305

One of Woolsey’s greater “triumphs” was the strategic acquisition of a sheep for his starving sailors, including young Cooper, from a reluctant rural wench, who only “wavered” after he began flattering her on her lovely offspring, who – in reality – were filthy brats:

“...Woolsey commenced an attack on the lady, by paying compliments to her fine children, three as foul little Christians as one could find on the frontier. This threw the mother off her guard, and she wavered. At this unguarded moment, the man [=the lady’s husband] accepted the half eagle, about five times the value of the wether, as sheep sold at that season, in the settled parts of the country, uttered a faint, “Well, captain, since you wish it—” and a signal from Woolsey caused the animal’s throat to be cut incontinently. At the next moment the woman changed her mind; but it was too late, the wether bleeding to death. Notwithstanding all this, the woman refused to be pacified until Woolsey made her a present of the skin and fleece, when the carcass was borne off in triumph.”

Lives, Vol. II, p. 133

Guert develops an ingenious plan to have Corny and Parson Worden, two innocents with no idea of the scope of Guert’s cunning, keep Doortje, the Mayor of Albany’s personal cook, distracted from her kitchen while making off with the hot meal that had already been prepared for the good mayor and his guests:

“Mr. Worden now began a grave and serious lecture on the sin of stealing, holding the confounded Doortje in discourse quite three minutes. In vain the cook protested that she had taken nothing....At length we heard a shrill whistle from the alley, the signal of success, when Mr. Worden wished Doortje a solemn good-night, and walked away with all the dignity of a priest.”

Satanstoe (Cooper Edition), Ch. XII, p. 178

When the City Constable appears to take Guert and his accomplices to account, Guert points out that in the Albany “poultry wars” (or, more accurately, “supper wars”), it is no problem for him to sequester the Mayor of Albany’s dinner with impunity because:

“There is no great danger, however, as you will see, when I come to explain matters. You must know that the Mayor’s wife was a Schuyler, and my mother has some of the same blood in her veins, and we count cousins as far as you can see, in Albany. It is just supping with one’s relatives, a little out of the common way, as you will perceive, gentlemen.”

Satanstoe (Cooper Edition), Ch. XIII, p. 182

Here again, the question of “blood lines” is decisive and will save the day. From the fun-loving and mischievous Guert, the spitting image of a Woolsey, *Satanstoe* develops the character into one of Cooper’s finest heroes.

Of course, one might ask *why Albany* with its Dutch heritage and with Guert Ten Eyck, the quintessential Dutchman in *Satanstoe*, should play such a prominent role. In 1831, writing from Paris, Cooper confirms the importance of Albany in his “earliest years:”

“...Albany was to me, a town of excellent social feeling and friendly connexions. I could not visit my own County without passing it, and I always entered it with pleasure, and left it with regret. My father died in Albany, at the inn of Stewart Lewis, in 1809, and my eldest brother Richard Fenimore Cooper, in his own house. [16] So you see, dear Sir, that Albany is a name I love for a multitude of associations that are connected with my earliest years.” Letter # 240. To William Sprague; from Paris, Nov. 15th, 1831, in *Letters and Journals*, vol. II, p. 155.

What is “Satanstoe?” [17] Cooper calls it a “Neck” in the shape of an “inverted toe.” Why inverted?

“(the devil being supposed to turn everything with which he meddles, upside-down)”
Satanstoe (Cooper Edition), Ch. I, p. 9

Cooper seems bent on standing a number of details from his youth on their head, i.e., “playing the devil,” to come to grips with his own life as it turned out and with the lives of others over which he had no control. America’s maritime historian, who wrote *Satanstoe* is up to more than railing against Anti-Renters. His tale is more subtle, his purpose nobler in resurrecting the places, people, and past he loved so dearly. Of his dear friend Guert, Corny writes:

“Thus prematurely, terminated the earthly career of as manly a spirit as ever dwelt in human form. That it had imperfections my pen has not concealed, but the long years that have since passed away, have not served to obliterate the regard so noble a temperament could not fail to awaken.”
Satanstoe (Cooper Edition), Ch. I, p. 9

Or was Cooper not writing about Guert at all? In *Lives*, Cooper penned the following eulogy of Woolsey:

“A better-hearted man never lived. All who sailed with him loved him, and he had sufficient native mind, and sufficient acquired instruction, to command the respect of many of the strongest intellects of the service.” *Lives*, Vol. II, p. 145

Satanstoe, perhaps more than any other novel by Cooper, illustrates how Cooper could frolick in his past, and provide delicious autobiographical rewrites of a past more to his liking. The reader glimpses a man capable of inventive playfulness, and not afraid to turn history upside down in a literary foray to rectify the past. Just as Cooper launched his career as a professional writer as the result of a *dare* from his wife Susan [18], his was the temperament of a man who was undaunted in his conviction that he could create *the better story*.

Plucked from two articles and consolidated into one article in November 2018

NOTES:

- 1 Although in the Introduction to the 1851 Putnam edition, Cooper emphatically rejected any autobiographical allusions in *The Pioneers*, this was no doubt due to a misplaced yet understandable feeling of piety. In *The Pioneers*, the “fearless mistress” Elizabeth Temple was warned by her father (Judge Temple) to exert more caution when crossing a precarious bridge on horseback. [Cf. *The Pioneers in Leatherstocking Tales*, vol. I, (New York: The Library of America, 1985), Ch. XXI, pp. 232-233; Cooper Edition/SUNY: pp. 230-231] It will be remembered that Cooper’s own sister died from a fall while horseback riding. The father’s explicit though belated warning and the reckless

daughter's survival in *The Pioneers* – an attempt, whether conscious or subconscious, to re-write his own childhood history?

- 2 *Correspondence of James Fenimore-Cooper*, edited by **James Fenimore Cooper** (1858-1938, James Fenimore Cooper's grandson), (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922), vol. I, p. 73: "He was expelled from Yale in his junior year, 1805."

For a detailed discussion of young Cooper's "gunpowder incident," cf. **Wayne Franklin, James Fenimore Cooper: The Early Years [=EY]**, Ch. II, subsection "Little Trooper," pp. 54-60.

- 3 As Cooper related many years afterwards, his "problem" was his "extreme youth" and immaturity. Added to this was the sad fact that his teachers failed to notice that Cooper was an exceptionally gifted youth and more advanced in his studies than most of his fellow students. In other words, no attempt was made to give the boy proper guidance while promoting his intellectual potential:

"My misfortune was extreme youth—I was not sixteen when you expelled me—I had been early and highly educated for a boy, so much so, as to be far before most of my classmates in latin, and this enabled me to play—a boy of thirteen! all the first year. I dare say Mr. Kingsley never suspected me of knowing too much, but there can be no great danger, now, in telling him the truth. So well was I grounded in the latin, that I scarce ever look'd at my Horace or Tully until I was in his fearful presence; and if he recollects, although he had a trick of trotting me about the pages in order to get me mired, he may remember that I generally came off pretty well."

LJ, Vol II, p.99 [Letter to Benjamin Silliman, written from Paris, June 10th, 1831].

- 4 James' "gunpowder experiment" cannot properly be described as a "prank," but as an act of retaliation for the severe caning he had received at the hands of a fellow classmate, the cause of which was possibly political.
- 5 William Cooper, his father's third son and namesake, was sent to Princeton at the age of fifteen. Instead of buckling down and studying, his time was spent indulging in pleasures and extravagance that had little to do with a university. Although his guilt or innocence was never established, a fire, apparently arson, led to his expulsion from Princeton, the ignominy of which barred young James from attending the same institution. Cf. *EY*, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-41.
- 6 Admittedly, James was more interested in play than study – reminiscent of his brother William. Yet, due to William's failings, James was apparently kept on a relatively short leash and literally had to beg his father for "a few coppers" to get by:

To Judge William Cooper

Yale-College, March 22nd, 1804.

Mr. Mix is very desirous of his money, being about to go to New York— if you have any and if it is agreeable to you to pay would I believe much oblige him. I have not a copper of money and am much in want of a little.

I am your affectionate Son
James Cooper.

CORR, Vol. I, p. 79 / (*LJ*, Vol. I, p. 9)

Consequently, penniless James, unlike dissolute William, was not given to strong drink, luxurious feasting, and, as might be expected from such a lifestyle, carefree indebtedness.

- 7 Cf. **James Fenimore Cooper**, *Lives of Distinguished American Naval Officers*, 2 vols (Philadelphia: Carey & Hart, 1846): Vol. II, p. 130. (Henceforth referred to as *Lives*.) The inclusion of “Woolsey” in *Lives*, involves “no changes of moment” from the original article in *Graham’s Magazine* over a year earlier:

“The other numbers shall be sent in a day, or two, though you can print Dale & Woolsey, if you see fir from Graham. They will contain no changes of moment.”

The Letters and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper in 6 vols. **James Franklin Beard**, Ed., (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 1968): cf. Vol. V., p. 95, Letter # 840. To Carey and Hart; From Hall, Cooperstown, Nov. 1 /1845.

- 8 Cf. *Lives*, Vol. II, p. 113.
- 9 Cf. *The Letters and Journals*, Vol. V., pp. 6-7, Letter # 787. To Richard Bentley; From Otsego Hall, Cooperstown, Jan. 22nd 1845.
- 10 Cf. *The Letters and Journals*, Vol. V., p. 92, Letter # 839. To Richard Henry Dana; From Hall, Cooperstown, Oct. 30th, 1845.
- 11 An aspect of Cooper’s works that has not been tackled by critics or analysts is an interpretation of *why* Cooper chose a particular epigraph to adorn the beginning of each chapter and often the beginning of a book. The reader will suspect that more than “decoration” is involved, yet the meaning or relevance of the epigraph for the chapter in question may be far from clear. For a helpful inventory of Cooper’s epigraphs, which also identifies the source of each epigraph (nearly all have been meticulously identified), cf. “*The Cooper Epigraphs*” by **Hugh C. MacDougall**: <http://external.oneonta.edu/cooper/writings/epigraphs.html>

Satanstoe opens in Chapter One with the following epigraph from Wm. Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*, II, iv., 19-21:

“—Look you who comes here:
A young man, and an old, in solemn talk.”

“You who comes here” may be Cooper addressing his reader. Is the young man the young Cooper, and the old man Cooper himself looking back upon his youth and attempting to redefine it? The “solemn talk,” in this case, would then be the “Littlepage manuscript” we find in *Satanstoe*.

- 12 Apart from his 1809 visit to the Falls and the description of his 1848 Lake Erie voyage in *Oak Openings*, which apparently mistakenly fixes the first visit at “thirty-eight” years earlier instead of “thirty-nine,” there is also a realistic fictional account of “A Tour Westward” in *The Travelling Bachelor; or, Notions of the Americans*, pp. 241-242, published in England in June 1828 and in the United States two months later:

DESCRIPTION OF A TOUR WESTWARD

TO SIR EDWARD WALLER; BART.
&c. &c.

New-York,

AFTER having ascended the Hudson as far as Albany, in company with La Fayette, and taken our leave of the veteran, our faces were turned west. At that place we saw a few remaining evidences of the Dutch, in the names and in the construction of a good many houses; but the city (containing about 16,000 inhabitants) is chiefly modern. Our route, for sixty or seventy miles, was along one of the great thoroughfares of the interior, when we inclined to the south, and having traversed a considerable tract of country to the southward of the beaten track of travellers, we entered the state of Pennsylvania, west of the Susquehanna, and proceeded to Pittsburgh. Thence we descended the Alleghany river to the Ohio, made a wide circuit in the state of the same name, and returned, by way of Lake Erie, to Buffalo (in New-York), which is a thriving fresh-water lake-port. We spent, of course, a few days examining the mighty cataract of Niagara, and in visiting the shores of Lake Ontario. On our return east, we followed the line of the great canal as far as Utica, where we made a diversion towards the north, for a couple of hundred miles, in order to permit Cadwallader to visit an estate of which he is proprietor. This duty performed, we made our way along the skirts of a wild and nearly uninhabited region, to the famous watering places at Saratoga and Ballstown; passed the Hudson at Troy, and crossing a spur of the Green Mountains, penetrated Massachusetts by its western border; traversed a small portion of Connecticut in a new direction; re-entered New-York above the Highlands, through which we journeyed by land, and regained this city, after an absence of about six weeks. We must have travelled, by land and water, between twelve and fifteen hundred miles.

As late as 1850, a bit more than one year before his death, Cooper was again at the Cataract, this time with his wife and daughter. Susan perhaps surprised her husband with her girlish delight:

Letter 1085. *To William Branford Shubrick*

Hall, Cooperstown, July 22d 1850

We – my wife and Charlotte and self – have been nearly across Michigan. We did the falls effectually. Went in the Maid of the Mist, fairly into the spray of both falls, sheering the boat within the Horse Shoe. I do not think there is any danger, though there is a devil of a roaring, nor do I think the boat could be forced against the surges under the fall. I suppose we must have been thirty fathoms from the falling sheet, except as we came up in the eddy under Goat Island, where we must have been within half that distance. We were fairly in the spray, however, which was like rain. The boat comes up from the Suspension Bridge, a distance of two miles, and the scenery is beautiful. Table Rock, or what is left of it, is still the best place to see the Falls, but the passage in the boat is the most exciting and agreeable. My wife was delighted, and so far from being afraid, she scampered around the boat with the rest, like a girl of sixteen.

- *Letters & Journals*, Vol. VI, p. 207

13 Cf. *Lives*, Vol. II, p. 114.

14 Cf. *Lives*, Vol. II, p. 144.

15 Cf. *Lives*, Vol. II, pp. 126-127, footnote.

16 James [Fenimore] Cooper's father, William Cooper died at the age of fifty-five on December 22, 1809. His brother Richard Cooper, barely thirty-five years of age, died on March 8, 1813. Cf. *EY*, pp. 129-130 and p. 176.

17 Cf. **Susan Fenimore Cooper**, *Pages and Pictures from the Writings of James Fenimore Cooper*, with Notes by Susan Fenimore Cooper (New York: W.A.Townsend and Co., 1861), p. 353:

“The name of "Satanstoe" was given to this book in a fit of intense disgust at the unmeaning absurdity of the newly-coined word of "Hurl Gate," which he often stigmatized as a piece of "canting corruption." He maintained that the name of Hell-Gate should either be left in its original form or entirely abandoned for something new; and Hurl-Gate he conceived a flagrant absurdity, quite unworthy of people of common sense.”

On p. 10 of *Satanstoe*, Corny is up in arms because an attempt is being made by a “Yankee,” of all people, to justify the corrupted form of “Dibbleton:”

“...we are not a people much given to altering the language, any more than the customs of our ancestors.”

Another possible consideration that may have aided Cooper in arriving at the combination of “Satan” (for “Devil”) and “Toe” (as an appendage) is to be found in the Woolsey chapter in the *Lives*, describing the voyage to Niagara in June 1809, pages 130 (& 132):

“Relying on his sails, Woolsey had taken but four men, and this was not a force to do much with the oars, so that turning to windward was the business most of the time. Three times the boat beat up to a headland, called the Devil's Nose, and twice it was compelled, by the wind and sea, to bear up, before it could weather it.”

A nose can be “turned up” (or “inverted”) as easily as a toe!

18 Cf. **EY**, p. 248. In the middle of May 1820, Cooper was reading aloud to his wife from a British novel (never identified), which he thoroughly disliked. Then, throwing it aside, Cooper exclaimed, “I could write you a better novel than that myself!” Whereupon his wife challenged him to do just that.