Before we go on to inspect Jane Austen's novels in separate chapters, it may be worthwhile to glance here at a smattering of dialogues from three of the fragments: "Catharine or the Bower," found in the Juvenilia; The Watsons, a later piece; and Sanditon, the story Jane Austen was writing at the time of her death. Whatever the risk in thus grouping together fictions from different creative periods, there are certain clear advantages. For one thing, the unfinished works exhibit some of the conversational devices I have mentioned in their starkest and least complex form. Also, the persistence of the devices over a span of time should suggest that they are basic to Jane Austen's technique.

The Juvenilia, of course, are rather barren hunting grounds for the controlled brilliance of Jane Austen's mature conversational effects. One reason is that she casts many of these pieces in an epistolary form, the narrative convention so familiar to her from eighteenth-century fiction, and this form clearly does not encourage dialogue. More important, the prevailing mode of the Juvenilia is burlesque, Jane Austen taking off on practically every feature of the sentimental novel so popular at the time, from its cult of sensibility to its narrative techniques. And for purposes of burlesque, speech itself need only contradict, or grossly exaggerate, or otherwise strongly underline an extreme: "Alas! (exclaimed I) how am I to avoid those evils I shall never be exposed to? What probability is there of my ever tasting the Dissipations of London, the Luxuries of Bath, or the stinking Fish of Southampton? I who am doomed to waste my Days of Youth and Beauty in an humble Cottage in the Vale of Uske" (Volume the Second, p. 79). For the most part, what flourishes
in the dialogues of the Juvenilia is excess of every sort, which is plainly Jane Austen's target.

But a few of the Juvenilia, notably "Catharine or the Bower," do contain conversations that seem nearer in tone to the finished novels. The fragment tells of a naive and pleasant young girl who lives in the country with a watchful aunt; fashionable city relatives visit them, the son of the family soon arriving unexpectedly and undertaking a courtship of Kitty. So far as it goes—and in this the story anticipates Northanger Abbey's juxtaposing of the young Thorpes and Catherine Morland—"Catharine or the Bower" depends upon contrasting the modish Miss Stanley and her brother with the essentially sensible Kitty. To some extent the verbal habits of the characters realize this distinction.

Camilla Stanley, for example, on learning that the neighbors she has readily abused are going to give a ball, shows her demanding giddiness in brief declarative rhythms that treat anything concerning herself with equal intensity:

"...—We are all the happiest Creatures in the World. What Charming People they are! I had no idea of there being so much sense in the whole Family—I declare I quite doat upon them—. And it happens so fortunately too, for I expect a new Cap from Town tomorrow which will just do for a Ball—Gold Net—It will be a most angelic thing—Every Body will be longing for the pattern—" (Volume the Third, p. 207)

Clearly, she conceives of every private emotion or idea as an absolute, so she utters her personal whims here as public generalizations. Her tendency to generalize indiscriminately is at moments counterpointed to Kitty's genial sense: when Camilla gushes, "I am always in love with every handsome Man in the World," Kitty replies with "There you outdo me for I am only in love with those I do see" (p. 223). Their dialogues also reveal Camilla resorting, under emotional pressure, to vehemently particular diction: "Well, I declare it is quite a pity that they should be suffered to live. I wish my Father would propose knocking all their Brains out" (p. 204). Kitty, on the contrary, evaluates with reliable concepts when she is displeased
with Camilla for not recognizing the plight of an indigent friend dispatched to India to get a husband:

“But do you call it lucky, for a Girl of Genius & Feeling to be sent in quest of a Husband to Bengal, to be married there to a Man of whose Disposition she has no opportunity of judging till her Judgement is of no use to her, who may be a Tyrant, or a Fool or both for what she knows to the Contrary.” (p. 205)

As this conversation continues, Kitty further differentiates herself from Camilla by distinguishing between the real and the apparent—the abiding theme in Jane Austen’s writings. When the thrilling appearances of such a “quest” incite Camilla to say, “I declare I should think it very good fun if I were as poor,” Kitty retorts with the truth: “I beleive you would think very differently then” (p. 205). But conversational effects of this sort, though they often pointedly contrast Kitty with Camilla, are not really sustained throughout the story.

Another kind of irresolution somewhat undermines Jane Austen’s effort at representing Edward Stanley in dialogue. She intends him, we finally make out, to be as foolish as his sister, but frequently his speech contradicts this. When Edward first appears, finding everyone except Kitty gone to the ball, he introduces himself in a scene that develops a real sense of controlled give and take within a standard social situation (p. 216). Perhaps his detachment in the following is a trifle overdone:

“You do me too much honour Ma'am, replied he laughing, in supposing me to be acquainted with M' & M'' Stanley; I merely know them by sight; very distant relations; only my Father & Mother. Nothing more I assure you.”

“Gracious Heaven!” said Kitty, are you M' Stanley then?—I beg a thousand pardons—Though really upon recollection I do not know for what—for you never told me your name—”

Edward need not have strained the joke by “very distant relations.” But, when Kitty instinctively retreats from the emotional “Gracious Heaven!” to the safety of ‘recollection’ and then
transforms her initial surprise into the attack of “you never told me your name,” he modulates his reply as delicately:

“I beg your pardon—I made a very fine speech when you entered the room, all about introducing myself; I assure you it was very great for me.”

“The speech had certainly great Merit, said Kitty smiling; I thought so at the time; but since you never mentioned your name in it, as an introductory one it might have been better.”

Edward’s social sense is absolutely sure when he stands apart from his speech to pass ironic judgment on it, the stance permitting him to belittle himself appropriately. This is precisely the controlled tone which, without giving himself away, may invite Kitty to pay a compliment. And she as carefully attends to the “speech” rather than the personality, for it allows her to praise him indirectly, by “great Merit,” yet without betraying a socially indecorous or personally excessive emotion. Both of them observe the rules of such an encounter beautifully. So far so good.

But apparently we must believe that the man who can make so strong a showing on one page will, two pages later, utterly give himself away as a ridiculous fop by saying, after taking “above half an hour” to make minor preparations in his dress for the ball, “Well have not I been very quick? I never hurried so much in my Life before.” There is no trace of irony here. And he is as completely enveloped in himself when he goes on to tell Kitty that it “will be a most agreeable surprize to everybody to see you enter the room with such a smart Young Fellow as I am” (p. 218). Yet a moment later Edward is once more in witty control, though Kitty’s conventionality leads her to protest against his plan. He has proposed that they compound the offense of traveling to the ball without chaperon by making an unannounced entrance:

“Do not you think your Aunt will be as much offended with you for one, as for the other of these mighty crimes.”

“Why really said Catherine [sic], I do not know but that she
may; however, it is no reason that I should offend against Deco-
rum a second time, because I have already done it once.”

“On the contrary, that is the very reason which makes it impos-
sible for you to prevent it, since you cannot offend for the first
time again.”

“You are very ridiculous, said she laughing, but I am afraid
your arguments divert me too much to convince me.” (p. 219)

The play with “reason” here and the occasionally sinuous move-
ment of the conversations look forward to the later novels. But
on the whole, the dialogue of “Catharine or the Bower” remains
marked by the abrupt exaggerations and the minor inconsisten-
cies in representing character that are usual in the Juvenilia.
The flashes of Jane Austen’s mature rhythms are too intermittent
to dramatize a really consistent body of attitudes.

II

It might be possible, though very risky, to apply the same sort of verbal analysis to the epistolary Lady Susan. Perhaps one
could discern the central conflict between Lady Susan and so-
ciety in the difference between her verbal habits and Mrs. Ver-
on’s: on the one hand, a willful misuse of conceptual terms
and of the standards they embody; on the other, a proper use of
such words and an allegiance to public norms, both of which
enable Mrs. Vernon to see through Lady Susan. But letters are
not dialogue, and they can hardly be treated as such. Moreover,
the epistolary convention is one that Jane Austen abandons in
her major novels (an early version of Sense and Sensibility was
a novel in letters)—abandons in part, I suspect, because the
convention traditionally required that the characters spell out
their motives quite clearly from time to time. And throughout
Jane Austen’s mature works, as we know, she prefers a conven-
tion in which most of the characters are seen from the outside
and may speak equivocally, a convention which locates dialogue
in a social setting. So it would be better for our purposes to turn to *The Watsons*, a work written after she had discarded the epistolary genre and one in which we have a fairly sustained attempt to dramatize characters and issues by conversation alone.

This fragment concerns the difficulties of the Watson sisters, hampered by the lack of money, in attracting serious suitors. Emma Watson, after living for fourteen years in comparative luxury and refinement with her aunt, is forced, by her aunt's second marriage, to return to her own home. Emma finds her eldest sister, Elizabeth, caring for their invalid father; her brother proudly married to a woman with £6,000; another sister, Margaret, away on a visit to her brother in hopes that Tom Musgrave will miss her; and a third sister on another visit in pursuit of an elderly man. The prime catch in the neighborhood is Tom Musgrave, on whom all the sisters, except Emma, have designs, but he is more interested in tending on Lord Osborne and the ladies at Osborne Castle. All the characters whom we hear either busily define a private, and therefore false, decorum or otherwise deviate from valid norms; thus the fragment seems constantly to shift its grounds, arbitrarily mooring its standards of behavior first in one character and then in another.

The first pages, for example, use the almost vulgar yet naturally agreeable Elizabeth to point up Emma's over-refinement. Elizabeth may expose a commonplace mind in her talk, which often runs on monotonously from fact to fact:

> "But first of all Nanny shall bring in the dinner. Poor thing!—You will not dine as you did yesterday, for we have nothing but some fried beef.—How nice Mary Edwards looks in her new pelisse!—And now tell me how you like them all, & what I am to say to Sam." (p. 341)

But she is fundamentally in touch with reality, and her plain speech is quite deliberately contrasted with Emma's rather blind commitment to delicacy of feeling. Emma will protest against another sister's conduct:

> "—To be so bent on Marriage—to pursue a Man merely for the sake of situation—is a sort of thing that shocks me; I cannot un-
derstand it. Poverty is a great Evil, but to a woman of Education & feeling it ought not, it cannot be the greatest.—I would rather be Teacher at a school (and I can think of nothing worse) than marry a Man I did not like.” (p. 318)

But Elizabeth takes the measure of Emma’s opinion in replying, “I would rather do any thing than be Teacher at a school. I have been at school, Emma, & know what a Life they lead; you never have.—I should not like marrying a disagreable Man any more than yourself,—but I do not think there are many very disagreable Men;—I think I could like any good humoured Man with a comfortable Income.” (p. 318)

The mildly ironic touches near the close here should not obscure Elizabeth’s almost compassionate sense of actuality. It crops up again and again, as in her praise of Emma for refusing a drive with Tom Musgrave—and in her clear-sighted judgment of herself: “You did very right; tho’ I wonder at your forbearance, & I do not think I could have done it myself” (p. 341). Indeed Jane Austen explicitly weighs Emma against Elizabeth in describing their reactions to an unexpected call by Lord Osborne: Emma, thrown into a flutter of excessive propriety, “felt all the inconsistency of such an acquaintance with the very humble stile in which they were obliged to live,” whereas “—Of the pain of such feelings, Eliz: knew very little;—her simpler Mind, or juster reason saved her from such mortification—& tho’ shrinking under a general sense of Inferiority, she felt no particular Shame” (p. 345).

Yet the somewhat precious Emma, without apparently undergoing any change in the fragment, becomes our standard for gauging the deviations of the other characters from a true decorum. She is a means to set off the nearly vacuous elegance of the Edwards family, or, more strikingly, to light up the moneyed vulgarity of her brother and his wife. Mrs. Robert Watson continually hints at a decorum founded on £6,000, whether she tells of being “as particular as ever” in always having her little girl “properly attended to” by a private maid (p. 350), or accepts the limited accommodations in the Watson home: “I hope I can
put up with a small apartment for two or three nights, without making a piece of work. I always wish to be treated quite ‘en famille’ when I come to see you” (p. 351). Her patronage insists that she is superior to the Watsons. Of course, her contrived superiority cracks at the slightest provocation because it does not conventionalize significant emotion, so she is heard snapping at Margaret, “You are a sad shabby girl.—I have been quarrelling with you all the way we came” (p. 350). Robert Watson’s language shows him to be as naturally irascible and quite as concerned with money. Of the aunt’s second marriage, which has thrown Emma back on the care of her own family, he snarls, “I hope the old woman will smart for it” (p. 352). His anger and devotion to money combine to produce so emotional a generalization as “A woman should never be trusted with money” (p. 351), or one even more self-interested, about the aunt keeping Emma “at a distance from your family for such a length of time as must do away all natural affection among us” (p. 352), a generalization that justifies Robert’s utter lack of feeling for Emma. To this couple’s egotism posing as rationality, Emma opposes her unselfish loyalty to her aunt: “Do not speak disrespectfully of her—She was very good to me; & if she has made an imprudent choice, she will suffer more from it herself, than I can possibly do” (p. 352). Her judgment, if it is a judgment, is carefully formalized: it tolerates no interference by the impertinent and it minimizes her private emotion.

In similar fashion Emma, though she hardly addresses Tom Musgrave, at least provides the major occasions that provoke his indecorousness, and she later serves as a foil to bring out Lord Osborne’s impropriety. The socially artful Tom, who plays Master of the Revels to Lord Osborne, is the most intriguing character in the fragment for anyone analyzing dialogue. The problem—solved more delicately in Jane Austen’s later management of Frank Churchill—is this: How can the clever fop’s speech dramatize his cleverness and foppishness at the same time? Here she undertakes a solution by allowing Tom to manipulate a conventional decorum for his own purposes in the conversations. But, as if not yet quite certain of her dramatic control, Jane
Austen immediately insures our disapproval by letting Emma overhear Tom when he agrees to lay the groundwork for the taciturn Lord Osborne’s introduction to her: “Very well my Lord—. If she is like her Sisters, she will only want to be listened to” (p. 333).

Only after we have been thus alerted, apparently, can we be trusted with Tom speaking to Emma (pp. 334–35). She has earlier danced with a little boy, Charles Blake, to make up for Miss Osborne’s incivility in breaking her promise to be his partner. Emma’s act gives Tom his opening after she has refused his own invitation to dance:

“My little friend Charles Blake, he cried, must not expect to engross you the whole evening. We can never suffer this—It is against the rules of the Assembly—& I am sure it will never be patronised by our good friend here M†E. She is by much too nice a judge of Decorum to give her license to such a dangerous Particularity.”

Note how quickly in his joking tone Tom erects a code of behavior out of “rules,” “Decorum,” and “Particularity.” But he does not do so because he considers these to be stable social values in whose interest he acts. On the contrary, he cites them only to establish his distance above the boy and Emma; his very creation of the code mocks Emma’s generous deed as singular. Having proven his social superiority by this trick, Tom seems for just a moment on the verge of exploring Emma herself when he goes on to inquire for her sisters: “How comes it, that we have not the pleasure of seeing your Sisters here this Evening?—Our Assemblies have been used to be so well treated by them, that we do not know how to take this neglect.” The impersonality of “your Sisters” and “Our Assemblies” could be read as accepted social practice, leading up to the more emotional, perhaps more personal, tone implicit in “neglect.” But no; Tom’s interest is really confined to himself, as is plain when he hears with feigned surprise that two sisters have long been absent from home: “But I am afraid I have been a very sad neighbour of late. I hear dreadful complaints of my negligence wherever
I go, & I confess it is a shameful length of time since I was at Stanton.” It might seem at first glance as if Tom disparages his departure from the conventional by such emotive terms as “sad,” “dreadful,” and “shameful,” but of course he actually intends them to elevate him above convention. In this initial meeting with Emma, Tom demonstrates his power first by formulating convention and then by insisting that it does not apply to himself. Here and throughout the fragment he bends every effort to convincing others that he belongs to the fashionable world of Lord Osborne.

Tom has one other resource, figurative language, for exhibiting his stylishness, and we should notice quickly how it works before passing on to Lord Osborne himself. On the day after the ball, Tom turns up to offer Emma a ride back to Stanton, bringing her a message from Elizabeth that the Watson carriage is delayed:

“I received that note from the fair hands of Miss Watson only ten minutes ago— I met her in the village of Stanton, whither my good Stars prompted me to turn my Horses heads—she was at that moment in quest of a person to employ on the Errand, & I was fortunate enough to convince her that she could not find a more willing or speedy Messenger than myself—. Remember, I say nothing of my Disinterestedness.” (pp. 338-39)

Tom’s chivalric figure consciously exaggerates, as he proves by deliberately fracturing it in the last clause to stress its weight, to make a parade of his simulated feeling. The impression he wants to create is not of sincere emotion but of his verve in formulating so pretentious a figure. His access to the terms and his control of them display his superiority again.

Unlike Tom Musgrave, Lord Osborne has no need to manufacture little verbal structures that lay claim to rank, for he is a noble by birth. His fashionable heritage expresses itself to some extent in the indecorously particular comments which, given his rank, he can afford. Yet the most interesting thing about Lord Osborne is how quickly Jane Austen has changed him under Emma’s pressure. The first time we hear him at any length
is with Emma, near the end of the fragment, when he and Tom pay an unprecedented visit to the Watsons (pp. 345-47). Lord Osborne starts out ungraciously enough when he finds that bad weather has kept Emma from a morning walk:

"You should wear half-boots." "Nothing sets off a neat ankle more than a half-boot; nankin galoshed with black looks very well.—Do not you like Half-boots? [Emma answers,] "Yes—but unless they are so stout as to injure their beauty, they are not fit for Country walking."—"Ladies should ride in dirty weather.

I wonder every Lady does not.—A woman never looks better than on horseback.—" "But every woman may not have the inclination, or the means." "If they knew how much it became them, they would all have the inclination, & I fancy Miss Watson—when once they had the inclination, the means would soon follow."

His disrespectfully specific talk of ankles, his generalizations that concern themselves only with appearances—both of these avow Lord Osborne's unwarranted sense of superiority. And they are refuted by Emma's grasp of reality—first in her distinction between the beauty and utility of "half-boots," then in her rational generalization that politely but positively differentiates between "inclination" and "means." Originally the conversation continued with Lord Osborne becoming more and more affronting, till Emma cuts him off with a "cold monosyllable & grave look"; then Lord Osborne "had too much sense, not to take the hint—& when he spoke again, it was with a degree of courteous propriety which he was not often at the trouble of employing."

But Jane Austen changes all this, adding on a separate sheet the following material in order to continue the talk with Emma's firm rebuttal and a rather different insight into Lord Osborne:

there are some circumstances which even Women cannot controul.—Female Economy will do a great deal my Lord, but it cannot turn a small income into a large one." . Her manner made his Lordship think;—and when he addressed her again, it was with a degree of considerate propriety, totally unlike the half-awkward, half-fearless stile of his former remarks.—It
was a new thing with him to wish to please a woman; it was the first time that he had ever felt what was due to a woman, in Emma's situation.—But as he wanted neither Sense nor a good disposition, he did not feel it without effect. (pp. 79-80)

Now there is a sharp change of heart on the part of Lord Osborne, which Jane Austen intervenes firmly to detail.

And a few pages later she revises a speech of his to Emma—the original phrasings are in brackets following the clauses that were substituted for them—to convert it into the most decorous of invitations:

"My Hounds will [I shall] be hunting this Country next week—I believe they will throw off at Stanton Wood on Wednesday at 9 o'clock. I mention this, in hopes of your being [I hope you will be] drawn out to see what's going on.—If the morning's tolerable, pray do us the honour of giving us your good wishes in person [do not be kept at home]." (p. 82)

Without exception, the revisions replace the dominantly personal tone of Lord Osborne's earlier remarks with that calculated impersonality which characterizes intercourse between equals. His observance of propriety is almost fierce. So pointed a transformation of Lord Osborne may lead us to wonder, incidentally, whether we can be positive that the fragment would have continued as the Austen family predicted, with Emma ultimately refusing him for Mr. Ioward, clergyman to the parish including Osborne Castle.

But however The Watsons might have proceeded, the fragment itself has one last dialogue that we should observe because it shows Jane Austen struggling with a technique which she uses more frequently and with greater finesse in the later novels. I mean her method of letting the characters treat an actual situation as a kind of sustained metaphor in their conversation, thus speaking with socially appropriate indirection while in fact revealing strong personal emotion. How demanding the method is we can see in the scene that follows between Margaret Watson and Tom Musgrave, where Jane Austen revises to
heighten the metaphoric effect (the original phrases are printed in brackets), forcing Margaret to plead her case by indirection for a time, though the structure finally cracks.

Margaret has just returned to Stanton from a month's visit with her brother, ostensibly coming to greet Emma, really because she is much taken with Tom. Through most of their dialogue (pp. 105-7), she pretends to talk of Emma, though basically she is exploring her own relation with Tom. He has appeared at the home of the Watsons bent on viewing Emma, not even knowing that Margaret is back; but of course, he recognizes immediately what she is up to and gives her small satisfaction. Tom begins the dialogue by professing great surprise that Margaret has been so long absent, carefully detaching himself from her and attaching himself to the fashionable world by such modishly emotional generalizations as "All hours are alike to me" and "'tis amazing how Time flies."

"You may imagine, said Marg' in a sort of Whisper, what are my Sensations [how great my enjoyment] in finding myself once more at Stanton. You know what a sad visitor I make.—And I was so excessively impatient to see Emma;—I dreaded the meeting, & at the same time longed for it.—Do you not comprehend the sort of feeling?"—"Not at all, cried he aloud. I could never dread a meeting with Miss Emma Watson,—or any of her Sisters." It was lucky that he added that finish.

It is clear that Margaret is really talking about her emotion for Tom, with Emma a convenient surrogate. The first revision intentionally subdues Margaret, substituting a lover's ambiguity, by which she hopes to arouse Tom, for the outright declaration of pleasure. Yet to find herself at Stanton is to be near Tom, and she guardedly begs him to admit what she implies that she has felt: sadness, impatience, dread, longing. Tom understands perfectly well what she wants, so he refuses, seizing the occasion to emphasize a particular interest in Emma. The "any of her Sisters" is a kind of controlled afterthought, designed actually to pacify Emma, who overhears her name, rather than Margaret. Jane Austen has deleted Margaret's "Oh! you Creature!" af-
ter the word “finish,” for this expression of emotion would again be too pointed. And Margaret goes on to probe Tom’s feeling for her metaphorically by compelling him to appraise Emma’s “complexion”:

‘—Did you ever see anything more perfectly beautiful?—I think even you must be a convert to a brown complexion.”—He hesitated; Margaret was fair herself, & he did not particularly want to compliment her; but Miss Osborne & Miss Carr were likewise fair, & his devotion to them carried the day. “ . You have seen Miss Osborne?—she is my model for a truly feminine complexion, & she is very fair.”—“Is she fairer than me? [She is about as fair as I am, I think]”—Tom made no reply.

Tom once more evades her, as usual assigning himself to a higher social status. By the final change Jane Austen tries hard to sustain the metaphorical effect by substituting a question for the blunt emotion of Margaret’s original demand. But Margaret’s “me” protrudes itself to shatter the metaphorical structure, and this conversation comes to an end. The artistic strain is noticeable in the revisions, and it is evident as well in Jane Austen’s intervention to explain Tom’s attitude explicitly. Later on she will trust the structure to carry its own weight.

This uncertainty, like her failure to mediate surely between Elizabeth and Emma in linking a sense of reality with a sense of decorum, or like her irresolution about Lord Osborne after placing him and Tom for us so securely, seems symptomatic of Jane Austen’s inexperience with a narrative convention to which she was probably only beginning to adjust, that convention which she makes triumphantly her own in the completed novels.

III

It is much more difficult to pass any decisive judgments on Sanditon, the work interrupted by Jane Austen’s death, than on The Watsons. For though this final fragment is slightly longer,
its apparent heroine, Charlotte Heywood, is hardly more than a name, and Jane Austen spends most of its pages in sketching a
gallery of eccentrics, the Parkers and the Denhams, who are
catched up in promoting Sanditon as a health resort. There is too
little evidence here, at least to my mind, for us to determine what
the major lines of force in the completed story might have been.
All we can safely say is that the mode of the fragment as we
have it, for whatever reasons, is largely parody. Thus the con-
versations are not very interesting technically, because in the
main each character exists in a single dimension.

Most often in the dialogues of Sanditon, Jane Austen depends
more on an exaggerated matter than a dramatic verbal manner
to expose her figures for us. The busybody Diana Parker, for in-
tance, speaks every dull item in her mind straight out:

'—You must have heard me mention Miss Capper, the particu-
lar friend of my very particular friend Fanny Noyce;—now,
Miss Capper is extremely intimate with a M'' Darling, who is
on terms of constant correspondence with M'' Griffiths herself.
—Only a short chain, you see, between us, & not a Link want-
ing. M'' G. meant to go to the Sea, for her Young People's bene-
fit—had fixed on the coast of Sussex, but was undecided as to
the where " (p. 408)

On and on she goes, for another page or so, finally stopping with
"Am I clear?—I would be anything rather than not clear.'
Poor Miss Bates never sank to this. Jane Austen exercises no
selectivity to represent the bore in this passage; she just repro-
duces her talk. Like much of the dialogue in the fragment, the
passage is not formed.

Only two characters, Mr. Parker and Sir Edward Denham,
are somewhat more successfully represented: at least each pos-
sesses a typical verbal manner that dramatizes him to some ex-
tent. Mr. Parker, as Sanditon everywhere makes clear, has no
conception of fact. The first chapter shows him in a locale
utterly unknown to him, disputing with a resident about where
he is and who lives down the road, convinced that the native is
wrong about his own neighborhood. In short, Mr. Parker has
transformed his wish into a “fact,” and the pattern recurs again and again in the fragment. If he does happen to start from a fact, he reverses the process, distorting the actuality until it accords only with his wish. So his new home on a cliff is much more advantageous than his old home in a comfortable valley, for now “We have all the Grandeur of the Storm, with less real danger, because the Wind meeting with nothing to oppose or confine it around our House, simply rages & passes on—while down in this Gutter—nothing is known of the state of the Air, below the Tops of the Trees” (p. 381). In similar fashion, his private desires are always the basis of his generalizations, which he takes to be literally true: but Sanditon itself—everybody has heard of Sanditon,—the favourite—for a young & rising Bathing-place, certainly the favourite spot of all that are to be found along the coast of Sussex;—the most favoured by Nature, & promising to be the most chosen by Man” (p. 368).

Evidently habits of mind like these hopelessly confuse reality with appearance. For example, when Mr. Parker receives a letter from his hypochondriac relations, he describes, before opening it, how the sensible Sidney Parker would react: ‘—Sidney laughs . but it really is no Joke—who Sidney often makes me laugh at them all in spite of myself.—Now, if he were here, I know he w'' be offering odds that either Susan Diana or Arthur w'' appear by this letter to have been at the point of death within the last month” (p. 385). Yet in spite of his reflection, when the letter does make just such extravagant claims, Mr. Parker is completely taken in: “Seriously, a very indifferent account” (p. 386). As always, he is quite absurd—and very good-hearted.

Sir Edward Denham, the other character who establishes himself by his verbal manner, is also absurd, so far as we can tell from the fragment, though in a very different way. Jane Austen reports that he has fallen under the spell of the passionate scenes in the books he has read, and she thus scores off the excessively emotional strain in fiction again, as well as the confusion of novels with life. Obviously Sir Edward’s sensibility has run wild, for he violates every linguistic propriety. Often he
seems to wallow in the intensities of figurative language, the
token of a diseased mind overwhelmed by feeling. Thus of Rob­
ert Burns, in whose poetry “there is Pathos to madden one,” Sir
Edward gushes, “His Soul was the Altar in which lovely Woman
sat enshrined, his Spirit truly breathed the immortal Incence
which is her Due” (p. 397). In the same way, his addiction to
highly evocative particular terms marks a gratuitous sensation­
alism: “—It were Hyper-criticism, it were Pseudo-philosophy to
expect from the soul of high toned Genius, the grovellings of
a common mind.—The Coruscations of Talent, elicited by im­
passioned feeling in the breast of Man, are perhaps incompatible
with some of the prosaic Decencies of Life” (p. 398). If Sir
Edward builds on conceptual terms, as in recounting his taste in
fiction, they inflate what he wants to say beyond all sense, so we
are not surprised when he finally abandons them in large part,
surrendering himself again to metaphor:

“You will never hear me advocating those puerile Emanations
which detail nothing but discordant Principles incapable of
Amalgamation, or those vapid tissues of ordinary Occurrences
from which no useful Deductions can be drawn. The
Novels which I approve are such as display Human Nature with
Grandeur—such as shew her in the Sublimities of intense Feel­
ing—such as exhibit the progress of strong Passion from the first
Germ of incipient Susceptibility to the utmost Energies of Rea­
son half-dethroned,—where we see the strong spark of Woman’s
Captivations elicit such Fire in the Soul of Man as leads him—
(though at the risk of some Aberration from the strict line of
Primitive Obligations)—to hazard all, dare all, atcheive all, to
obtain her.” (p. 403)

His rhetoric in this passage is the appropriate counterpart to
Sir Edward, the parallelism, climactic series, and suspension de­
veloping an intensity reckless of consequences.

Yet even though Sir Edward and Mr. Parker are dramatized
by their verbal mannerisms, they emerge as caricatures rather
than portraits; and in truth, they strike us as little closer to
rounded persons than the characters in the novel to whom Jane
Austen assigns a parodic matter only. For greater subtlety, or
more finished workmanship, we must turn to the major novels, where Jane Austen has smoothed the jagged outlines of the Juvenilia, The Watsons, and Sanditon. In the completed works we will find the dialogue more precisely structured and much more revealing.

1. There is a similar uneasiness on Jane Austen's part when she tries to regulate the story's point of view in relation to Tom Musgrave, a natural enough difficulty if much of her previous experience had been with the epistolary convention. Through most of the fragment she is driven to such evasions as "Emma's calm curtsey in reply must have struck him & gave him probably the novel sensation of doubting his own influence" (p. 335) or "As Tom Musgrave was seen no more, we may suppose his plan to have succeeded, & imagine him mortifying in dreary solitude" (p. 336). Not until the fragment is almost over does she drop the mood of supposition to speak more directly—in the customary way of the later novels—with the authority of an author: "He loved to take people by surprise, with sudden visits at extraordinary seasons" (p. 355).

2. From now on in this chapter, the page references to The Watsons will be to R. W. Chapman's separate edition of the work, for I shall be glancing in one way or another at Jane Austen's revising.