**Abstract**

This thesis is a critical edition of William Sampson’s mid-seventeenth-century play, *The Vow Breaker, or The Fair Maid of Clifton*, edited according to the guidelines set down by the Revels Plays Series. The Introduction is in ten sections: a general introduction to the play; William Sampson; performance; synopsis; the siege of Leith; navigation of the Trent; the significance of The Fair Maid of Clifton; Hans Wallrath; The influence of Shakespeare on *The Vow Breaker*; and, John Norton, and the probable nature of the text. In addition, there is a full textual collation and details of editorial procedures. The play itself is presented in a fully modernised version. There is a full Commentary with index, and a bibliography. In the Appendix there is a facsimile of the Bodleian copy of *The Vow Breaker* and a map suggesting Sampson’s connection with the counties of Nottingham and Derby.

This is the first modern edition of *The Vow Breaker* and is supported by a full Commentary. The Introduction supplements that of Hans Wallrath of 1914 and brings together in one place all the other information that I have been able to find about the play and its contexts. My thesis makes this little-known play accessible to modern readers and enables some, at least, of its original meanings and resonances to be recovered. In addition, I have produced a text that might be usable to anyone who wished to stage a performance.