

The Border Widow's Lament

counter melody

arr. Ruth Flavin

traditional

The musical score is written for a harp in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). It consists of two systems of music. The first system has five measures, and the second system starts at measure 5 and also has five measures. The melody is primarily in the treble clef, with some chords in the bass clef. The piece concludes with a double bar line at the end of the second system.

Between 14th and 17th century land between Gretna and Carlisle was considered and called 'Debatable Land.' The border between Scotland and England was characterised by lawlessness, suffering from violent feuds and raids by "reivers". King James V sought to subdue this chaos by executing prominent reivers. This song relates to the execution of a Border man, likely Cockburne of Henderland, in 1529, who was hanged over his own tower gate.

The Border Widow by William Bell Scott. 1861. Oil on canvas

