J. M. Bumsted is a prolific and diverse writer having edited or written more than thirty books, including "The Collected Writings of Lord Selkirk 1799-1809" and "The Collected Writings of Lord Selkirk 1810-1820," Volumes VII and IX of The Manitoba Record Society Series. His biography of Lord Selkirk is unprecedented in its detail. He has a passion for setting the scene and including all the external detail, so that the reader feels part of what is being written. This book has a wide screen: while ostensibly a biography of Selkirk, it also includes fascinating details on people and events in Scotland, the fur trade, emigration, and travels in the New England States and British North America.

Thomas Douglas, born in 1771 in Kircudbright, Scotland, was not brought up as the legal heir of the earldom, but owing to the death of older brothers he became the Fifth Earl of Selkirk in 1799. Here was no effete nobleman, having spent time a few years after 1797 managing the family estates. His interest in emigration and the welfare of the poor would later lead him to his various emigration endeavours.

Lord Selkirk established three settlements in British North America: Prince Edward Island in 1803, Baldoon in Upper Canada the following year, and the Red River Settlement in 1812. The first two were failures owing mainly...
Thomas Douglas, the Fifth Earl of Selkirk (1770-1820), was a complex man of his times, whose passions left an indelible mark on North American history. As Earl, Selkirk became involved in local politics and developed a fascination with Scottish emigration to the New World. His first settlement was in Prince Edward Island, Canada; but his most famous plan, the Red River settlement, became his greatest passion and his ultimate demise. The settlement quickly became the focus of an intense rivalry between the two giants of the fur trade, North West Company and Hudson's Bay Company. The product of three decades of research, this is the definitive biography of Lord Selkirk. Bumsted's passionate prose and thoughtful analysis illuminate not only the man, but also the political and economic realities of the British empire at the turn of the nineteenth century.