This book presents a pioneering exploration of the initial stage of the emergence and development of modern geographical imagination in Russia. It deals with a period of the intellectual life around 1830s when a new paradigm of geography that was developed during German Romanticism was adopted by Russian men of letters. The research focuses on the creative work of Nikolai Gogol who was the first in Russia to grasp and describe the new scientific approach to geographical reality as a method in teaching geography. He was also the first to employ spatial images and other information from the geographical and cartographical sources in his fictional work. The book reveals that the specific kind of geographical landscape created by Gogol in his stories was based on the writings of German geographers, Alexander von Humboldt and Karl Ritter.Those works served him as a resource of required information and as an important medium of the romantic philosophy that shaped his creative work.

Since the critical tradition of human geography is almost absent in the studies of the discipline in Russia, the research on Gogol’s geographical theme appears to be the first attempt to consider critically the Romantic foundation of Russian geographical discourse of the time and its influence on Russian Romantic literature. The book maps the points in Russian cultural field in which reflection and development of German geography was or could have been possible, and discusses Gogol’s chances to have had an access to them. It is for the first time that an intellectual and artistic life of the 1830s in Russia is taken under such historical scrutiny in terms of geography as a science that was shaping the spatial conciousness of the age.

Since Gogol’s writings on geography that were almost prophetic for his time, as well as his geographical landscapes were not acknowledged as such by his contemporaries and later researchers, the book argues that only in the light of the contemporary critique of geographical discourse the ideas and geographical images of Gogol could be properly assessed. For the purposes of research into the grounds of the author’s interest in geography, the idea of visual aspects of the discipline and its power to produce visual images of space in the cultural geography was chosen as the central topic for the analysis. My aim was to reveal that Gogol was interested in geography because of its ability to *create*, *show* and make people *see* the whole world through verbal description or through representation in visual images, maps and landscapes. The book argues that employing visual and verbal geographical sources enabled Gogol to acquire specific *geographical vision* as it is represented in landscapes and maps.

The archeology of Gogol’s geographical ideas and analysis of the intertextual relations between the author’s fiction and geographical sources used made it possible to discover new aspects of his landscapes created on the basis of geographical descriptions of nature and maps. It is commonly assumed that Gogol’s landscapes were works of fantasy, endowed with mythological and folkloric images of nature, or manifestations of his romantic attitude. The book argues that Gogol’s landscapes, though ingenious in their poetics, are aimed for the historically and geographicalally precise representation of nature to express the spirit of the people and reflect their history and culture, as it was explicated by J. G. Herder and F. W. J. Schelling. The research reveals that in order to be precise geographically, according to Gogol, one needs to use maps and geographical accounts. Thus, Gogol shared the same fascination for science as did other romantic authors (for example, Novalis, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge), and considered it to be the spring of poetic inspiration.

*Gogol and the Geographical Imagination of Romanticism* is a case study that deals with one author and one short period in the development of Russian Romanticism. Nonetheless, due to the fact that Gogol’s romantic conception of geography as well as his geographical landscapes were absolutely exceptional for the time, the research of Gogol’s case becomes the research of an entire process of 1830s in which the romantic idea of the nation as a consequence of its natural environment shaped the relationship between a man and nature in Russian literature.

### The work’s fit with existing literature, comparison with published books on the topic

My research was inspired and done considering the breakthrough in the study of philosophical and aesthetic foundation of modern geography in the book of Chenxi Tang *The Geographic Imagination of Modernity: Geography, Literature, and Philosophy in German Romanticism* (Stanford University Press, 2008). Tang’s reconstructions of geographical paradigm in German romantic philosophy and literature made it possible to understand the coherent system of geographical and aesthetic ideas on geography in the works of Gogol. According to Tang, geographical imagination was the specific way of thinking about the unity of people with the Earth which emerged in Germany around 1800s, and was accumulated by geography along with Romantic philosophy and aesthetics to produce the new paradigm of the discipline. The book on Gogol, in turn, offers an account how (and why) the novel science of geography, which came to fruition in the writings of Alexander Humboldt and in the science of Karl Ritter, proved to be a source for the works of literature.

In dealing with Gogol’s enthusiasm for visual aspects of geography, the research adresses the notion of geographical imagination developed in the critical theory of cultural geography. The theoretical sources particularly relevant for the book were Derek Gregory’s *Geographical Imaginations* (Blackwell, 1994) and two works byDenis Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), and *Geography and Vision: Seeing, Imagining and Representing the World* (I. B. Tauris, 2008). The authors’ suggestions for thinking about visuality of geography encouraged me to make the same turn in approaching the landscapes of Gogol. However, I did not go further into the critique of the appropriating colonizing gaze, as the Oriental landscape was interpreted by W. J. T. Mitchell (“Imperial Landscape”, *Landscape and Power*, The University of Chicago Press, 1994; 2002), or Cosgrove and Gregory. Closer to my approach is Melissa Frazier’s idea that in *Arabesques* Gogol himself was a part of the *whole* about which he was writing, whether it was Ukraine, or Russia (*Frames of the Imagination*, Peter Lang, 2000). Thus, geography for Gogol served as a means of creating his identity rather than a means of colonizing.

In the book, the preference was given to the notion of geographical imagination instead of imaginary/imagined geographies – a term used by Edith W. Clowes in her *Russia on the Edge* (Cornell University Press, 2011) when she examined the symbolic imagining of identity in spatial metaphors of territory and geography. The similar process in the 19th century Russia was analyzed in Susan Layton’s *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge University Press, 1994) in which the author shows how literature, especially in Pushkin’s time, functioned as a substitute for geography. In my book, the term ‘geographical imagination’ overarches these symbolic practices of spatial identity-making but also, due to Tang’s work, it is able to convey the imaginative aspect of the science of geography itself. Gogol was really occupied by the theoretical problems of geography as a scientific discipline, and worked to elaborate techniques of teaching it to children. The imaginative geographies of his fiction were the result of his engagement with geography which, in the era of Romanticism, was constructing itself as geographical imagination.

In the field of Russian Romanticism, works of Susanne Fusso and Melissa Frazier, namely, , were the most important for me since they discuss Gogol’s theoretical works in *Arabesques*.. Both authors place *Arabesques* in the context of German Romanticism and deal with Gogol’s article on geography, as well as with an issue of the relationship between geography and history. My book adds to these discussions a theme of geography as a distinct field of science and specific knowledge that shapes our imagination of the world. For Gogol, the discipline of geography was not a matter-of-course. He actually started a new discourse inspired and influenced by geographical sources, namely, writings of Humboldt and Ritter, and considered them to be scientific. I presume that these sources served him as a medium for the romantic theory, and as such, they were not under the consideration by literary critics. In addition, I took into account the first version of the article “Thoughts on Geography” (1831) that had not been analyzed before, although it laid a basis for Gogol’s entire concept on geography and history.