Preface

The first Russian novel I read was Turgenev’s *A Nest of Gentry*. I was impressed by its tone, and the liveliness of the descriptions, but foremost by the actual beauty (I know no other term) of its presentation of the tragic events changing the lives of the hero and heroine. This is a quality, so I discovered upon reading more of his work, that is inherent to Turgenev’s way of describing his characters’ lives. He is profoundly interested in the role of tragedy and its effects on the human being. During the research project in which my ever-growing fascination with Turgenev culminated, and of which this book is the palpable result, I have tried to develop a model that allows for a textual analysis of the means by which Turgenev presents tragedy. I hope to have avoided taking the analysis to the point of dissecting the novels, in a fashion that would call to mind Rudin’s dissecting the other characters’ personalities in Turgenev’s first novel. I hope to have provided tools for an understanding of the novels that will only enhance their great value as aesthetic renderings of the essential themes of human existence.

I want to thank everyone who has supported me during my research. I would like to name a number of persons in specific. First of all, I thank my promotor Joost van Baak for introducing me to Russian literature, for encouraging me to start the PhD project and for continuously supporting the process of its development with many good advices. We share a deep interest in nature and during our meetings we often not only discussed the field of literature, but also exchanged the experiences we had during trips into the sometimes seemingly more accessible fields that are the home of larks and roe deer.

I want to thank Sander Brouwer for reading and rereading my output and for providing innumerable useful threads of thought often leading to illuminating views of both Turgenev’s and other Russian authors’ work.

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Before turning to a discussion of the novels I have to make a few technical remarks. All translations of quotations from Russian texts are my own, unless otherwise indicated. I have chosen to spell Russian names, both of fictional characters and of real persons, according to the official transliteration (ISO/R9 – 1968). Of course, in quotations of other authors, in which Russian names occur, I have retained their spelling.