At the end of the nineteenth century, Anastasiia Verbitskaia made the decision to found her own publishing house, and from then on, to publish most of her own books as well as translations of Western novels primarily about "the woman question." The move was risky – she had no guarantee that she would recoup the costs of producing, distributing, and advertising the books. Yet she appears to have been determined to free herself of the need to please various male authority figures. Archival correspondence lets us into the world of an ambitious young female author with no literary connections who initially put her faith in the judgments of male editors. At least three very discouraging encounters with such figures spurred her on to independence. As a solution to the thorny problem for women of getting into print, Verbitskaia's may have been unique.2

First encounter
In Russia of the late nineteenth century, "serious" writers made money primarily through the publication of their work in the so-called "thick" journals as opposed to publishing in less prestigious places such as newspapers and "thin" journals. For establishing one's reputation in the high-brow literary world, publication in one of the nationally distributed thick journals was a requirement.3

1. Research for this article was made possible by a Fulbright award from the US State Department in 2004. While on the Fulbright I was well received at RGALI and given access to their rich archival holdings on Verbitskaia for which I am very grateful.

2. I am not aware of any other such endeavors by women at this time, though Poliksena Solov'eva and Natal'ia Manaseina founded a publishing house, "Tropinka," that published mostly books for children, but also a few of Solov'eva's books for adult readers. See Nancy Lynn Cooper, "Poliksena Solov'eva," in Russian Women Writers, Christine Tomei, ed. (New York and London: Garland, 1999), 1: 585, 601, n. 6, and bibliography. For a discussion of the obstacles to women's publishing in the first half of the nineteenth century, see Diana Greene, Reinventing Romantic Poetry: Russian Women Poets of the Mid-Nineteenth Century (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 2004), especially the "Introduction" and ch. 1.

3. The newspapers and "thin" journals also paid less. On the prestige of the "thick" journals in the 1880s and into the 1890s, see Andrew R. Durkin, "Chekhov and the journals of his time," in Literary Journals in Imperial Russia, Deborah A. Martinsen, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997), pp. 236-37.
The "thick journals" would review one another's issues, and a good review placed one on the forefront of the elite literary scene. Subsequent publication in book form of a novel or a collection of stories, plays, or poems, brought relatively little income to the writer. Most profits went to the publisher and the booksellers. So acceptance into such a journal was crucial both for economic survival of those dependent on their writings for income, and, very importantly, for one's sense of having "arrived" on the serious literary scene.

In the second volume of her autobiography Verbitskaia remembered the period prior to 1894 as "years of humiliation and searching; a silence of seven years; the loss of faith in myself" due to her difficulties in gaining acceptance by the thick journals. The first known encounter occurred in the fall of 1881, documented in a letter from Lev Ivanovich Polivanov. The subject of this correspondence concerned one of her earliest attempts at "serious" writing — a novel entitled Gubernantka (The Governess), no doubt based on her own experience as a governess for a year, in 1878-79, and on Charlotte Brontë's novel Jane Eyre which she had read. It is not possible from Polivanov's letter to reconstruct Verbitskaia's novel. At its center was undoubtedly a heroine whom he characterizes as representing goodness, humility, and love, and who is oppressed by her social surroundings. The novel also touched on the need for freedom of choice in love and on the destructiveness of egoism.

Verbitskaia notes that she and her mother together decided to send the first part off to N. K. Bazhin who headed up the literary section of the left-leaning journal Delo (The Cause) in the years 1880-1884. He encouraged her to continue working on the novel, but did not accept it for publication. She says she reworked the novel and sent off the first half to Polivanov. Polivanov was the owner of a prestigious private school, a classical gymnasium for boys in Mos-

4. I believe that one of the reasons that Verbitskaia decided to collect her published works into book form was the general silence about her stories in thick journal reviews.
6. Located in Polivanov's archive, RGALI, f. 2191, op. 1, ed. khr. 20, "Pis'mo k nachinauschei romanistke (A. A. Ziablovoi)," from the backside of sheet 36 to sheet 45, dated September 12, 1881 (old style). Verbitskaia had just left the Moscow Conservatory of Music, where she had been a voice student for two years, in order to accept a good-paying job as choir director and music teacher at her former institut, the Elizavetinskii, in Moscow.