I chose the following five fairy tales for their feature of unusually strong, or at least interesting, female characters. The RBSC’s “Across Enchanted Lands” exhibition catalogue was of great use to me in finding some of them.

   http://webcat1.library.ubc.ca/vwebv/holdingsInfo?bibId=13779

   “The Wounded Lion” is a Spanish fairy tale collected by the Catalan folklorist D. Francisco de S. Maspons y Labros, in *Cuentos Populares Catalans (Catalan Folk Tales)* published in 1885 in Barcelona. It was included by Andrew Lang in his *Pink Fairy Book* published in London in 1897. Ford’s illustrations really capture what I interpret as the free-spirited and brave protagonist, a humble cowherd. The second illustration shows a very classically-inspired depiction of this character as she stands up bravely to the ferocious giant. She seems very small and feminine in contrast to his looming, brutish shape, yet she is holding her ground. Her statuesque pose seems immovable as stone as she lifts the woven coat up for his inspection. Despite her humble beginnings as a poverty-stricken working-girl, she is able to use her wit and her bravery to win the love of a powerful prince who makes her queen of the land. The tale ends by stating she “richly deserved all the honors showered upon her” (199).

   (Illustrations below are from pages 193 and 197, consecutively, in the *Pink Fairy Book*).
THE MAIDEN BRINGS THE COAT OF HAIR TO THE GIANT.
Frances Browne chose to write this book with a 'narrative' fairy tale as a framing story. This story, among the ones featured in the book, is the one I've chosen for my collection. The framing story surrounds the experiences of a young girl named Snowflower after her Grandmother leaves her for a few weeks with a mysterious story-telling chair. I chose this story for its centering of Snowflower's character in the plot, and for the fact that Snowflower's kindness is not rewarded with marriage or any male-dominated situation at the end. Rather, she is given friendship and plenty of resources for a happy life with simply her Grandmother Frostyface. This ending subverts expectations for the fairy tale genre by allowing Snowflower to remain independent and choose her own fate, whatever it may be (something not often available to female characters). I found Dora Curtis's illustrations for Browne's tales to be very expressive, using scale and contrast to convey emotion and character. The image I've attached here depicts the small and deceptively 'helpless' Snowflower at the feet of her Grandmother's (comparatively very large) magical chair.

(The following image is from Page 2 of Granny's Wonderful Chair and its Tales of Fairy Times).
3. “Gracieuse and Percinet” from *Fairy Tales (Les Contes des Fées)* by Marie-Catherine d’Aulnoy, translated by James Robinson Planché and illustrated by John Gilbert. Published in London by G. Routledge in 1868. Call Number: PZ6 1868 A845  
http://resolve.library.ubc.ca/cgi-bin/catsearch?bid=142180

Marie-Catherine Le Jumel de Barneville, Baroness d’Aulnoy, or better known as “Madame d’Aulnoy” was famous for her fairy tales. It is said that when she used the term “contes des fees” (fairy tales) to describe her works, she originated the term that is now used for the genre. I chose this fairy tale for my collection because I was interested in Gracieuse’s resistance to the advances of the amorous Percinet. I found her cautious treatment of her suitor/servant, as well as her loyalty to her father, made sense in the context of her upbringing. Although the narrator seems to imply that Gracieuse’s trust came too slow, I tended to admire her strength of character. I found Gilbert’s illustrations delicate but detailed, and chose to attach a particular image in which Gracieuse is positioned on an ostentatiously ornamented horse, and she looks down on Percinet, even though she is equal to him in rank. This illustration to me shows that she has dignity and confidence in her own judgment. The composition of the drawing seems to encourage the reader to feel respect for her character.

(The following illustration is found between pages 4 and 5 in *Fairy Tales*).
Call Number: PZ6 1882 G754  
[http://resolve.library.ubc.ca/cgi-bin/catsearch?bid=175579](http://resolve.library.ubc.ca/cgi-bin/catsearch?bid=175579)

Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm are among the first and best-known collectors of German and European folk tales, and are responsible for the popularization of all-too familiar fairy tales today (such as “Cinderella” and “Hansel and Gretel”). While many of the Grimms’ fairy tales feature characters who face sacrifice and extremely difficult challenges, I’ve always been intrigued by the pain and suffering of the female protagonist of “The Six Swans”, hence my choosing it for my collection. In particular, I found the princess’s vow of silence to magnify and complicate her trials. She is a remarkably strong character, and saves her helpless brothers through intense diligence and love. The one full-page illustration for this story is a wonder to look at; it’s full of the drama of the depicted moment. The swans’ bodies create swirling motion around the figure of the princess, foreshadowing the smoke of the impending burning. In a corner, you can see the figure of the wicked mother-in-law as she cowers in dismay at the spectacle before her.

(The following image is found between pages 198 and 199 of *Household Stories*).
THE SIX SWANS

The swans came close up to her, with rushing wings, and stooped 'round her, so that she could throw the shirts over them.
   [http://resolve.library.ubc.ca/cgi-bin/catsearch?bid=14323](http://resolve.library.ubc.ca/cgi-bin/catsearch?bid=14323)

I chose this tale because, although well-known, it is to me psychologically complex and invites a host of different interpretations. I’m especially interested in readings of the young protagonist and how her femininity (and possibly sexuality) influence the plot. Lydia Louisa Anna Very was an American writer, educator, and illustrator, and is responsible for creating the very first ‘shape books’ in America (*Little Red Riding Hood* is supposedly the first book in the United States to be shaped like a person or animal). I enjoy Lydia’s playfulness with the presentation of the story. The text has all been poeticized, and rolls off the tongue when read aloud. The choice to format the shape of the book in the figure of Red Riding Hood herself perhaps makes it more interactive for child audiences (the book can multitask as both story and doll). This choice also seems to take into account the centrality of the female protagonist, as well as the importance her physical body has within the tale itself. The in-text illustrations are often simple, but show a lot of care and detail in their cross-hatching. Their regularity and expressiveness, along with the story’s poetry, help move the story along at a smooth pace.

(The illustrations below are found on the cover of *Red Riding Hood* and pages 10 and 11, consecutively).
Himself in cap and night gown
Then quickly on the bed,
Closely upon the pillow
He laid his grizzly head:

Red Riding Hood soon entered;
"O, grandmamma, see here!
A little pot of batter!"
Where is my grandma dear
Here said the Wolf, well knowing,
Her grandmam's voice so weak.
I'm here so sick my darling,
That I can scarcely speak.
When you are here beside me.
Take off your clothes my darling.
I'll be better by and by.
Additional Sources

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