The May Pole Song

Initially the song starts out confusing, why is the tree personified and given ‘he’ pronouns? Given human body parts like ‘Limb’.

In the woods there grew a tree
A fine, fine tree was he
On that tree there was a limb
And on that limb there was a branch
On that branch there was a nest
And in that nest there was an egg
In that egg there was a bird
And from that bird a feather came
Of that feather was a bed
On that bed there was a girl
And on that girl there was a man
From that man there was a seed
And from that seed there was a boy
From that boy there was a man
And for that man there was a grave
From that grave there grew a tree
In Sumerisle, Sumerisle, Sumerisle, Sumerisle, Sumerisle
On that tree there was a limb
And on that limb there was a branch
On that branch there was a nest
And in that nest there was an egg
In that egg there was a bird
And from that bird a feather came
Of that feather was a bed
In Sumerisle, Sumerisle, Sumerisle, Sumerisle, Sumerisle
On that bed there was a girl
And on that girl there was a man
From that man there was a seed
And from that seed there was a boy
From that boy there was a man
And for that man there was a grave
From that grave there grew a tree

The song gives the impression of the circle of life and nature, the reoccurring events of growing, creating, birth and dying. The act of fertility is very prominent throughout the entirety of the text.

The cycle yet agin reappears with girl, man, seed, boy, man, grave tree

Here the pattern is showing, a recycle of tree, limb, branch, nest, egg, bird, feather bed

In these lines, the man passes away and in his place grows a new tree.

Now a female character has been added into the song. A ‘seed’ is provided from a man, a metaphor for a baby, explained in the next line ‘there was a boy.’