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.’