

Scottish ballads embodying this theme are probably so derived,¹ but Child thinks this is a somewhat hasty assumption, and that the question as to the priority of romances or ballads is an open one.² We can be reasonably certain, that these romances, in their turn, were founded on earlier oral traditions.

The idea underlying all these examples seems to be that the trees or plants are, as Hartland thinks, "merely the lovers transformed."³ It may also be due to "the old superstition of the soul embodying itself in a tree above the grave,"⁴ just as, in a Ukrainian song, the rose above a young man's grave is regarded as his soul.⁵ Classical mythology is full of such transformations of human beings into plants; for instance, the story of Narcissus.

As to the ballad of "Lord Lovel" itself, independent of the theme, we do not know when it originated, or whether the original one was founded on any actual event or not. The earliest copy, "Lady Ouncebell," known to exist, was "communicated by singing" in the year 1770, and it may easily be several centuries older. Our version may be derived more directly from an early broadside, now lost. It is of interest to note in this connection that most of the "Lord Lovel" ballads collected in the United States are of the same type as Child's *H* and our version. Probably they were transmitted to America through the medium of broadsides rather than through oral transmission.

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¹ *Minstrelsy*, Vol. II, p. 128.

² Part I, p. 98.

³ Hartland, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

⁴ Henderson, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

⁵ Puymaigre, *op. cit.*, p. 189, citing Chodzko, p. 30.