

ALVÍSSMÁL (*The Ballad of Alvis, Sayings of All-Wise, Talk of Alvis*)

Bellows' Introduction (1936)

No better summary of the *Alvissmol* can be given than Gering's statement that "it is a versified chapter from the skaldic Poetics." The narrative skeleton, contained solely in stanzas 1-8 and in 35, is of the slightest; the dwarf Alvis, desirous of marrying Thor's daughter, is compelled by the god to answer a number of questions to test his knowledge. That all his answers are quite satisfactory makes no difference whatever to the outcome. The questions and answers differ radically from those of the *Vafthruthismol*. Instead of being essentially mythological, they all concern synonyms. Thor asks what the earth, the sky, the moon, and so on, are called "in each of all the worlds," but there is no apparent significance in the fact that the gods call the earth one thing and the giants call it another; the answers are simply strings of poetic circumlocutions, or "kennings." Concerning the use of these "kennings" in skaldic poetry, cf. introductory note to the *Hymiskvitha*.

Mogk is presumably right in dating the poem as late as the twelfth century, assigning it to the period of "the Icelandic renaissance of skaldic poetry." It appears to have been the work of a man skilled in poetic construction.--Thor's questions, for instance, are neatly balanced in pairs,--and fully familiar with the intricacies of skaldic diction, but distinctly weak in his mythology. In other words, it is learned rather than spontaneous poetry. Finnur Jonsson's attempt to make it a tenth century Norwegian poem baffles logic. Vigfusson is pretty sure the poem shows marked traces of Celtic influence, which is by no means incompatible with Mogk's theory (cf. introductory note to the *Rigsthula*).

The poem is found only in *Regius*, where it follows the *Thrymskvitha*. Snorri quotes stanzas 2c, and 30, the manuscripts of the *Prose Edda* giving the name of the poem as *Alvissmol*, *Alsvinnsmol* or *Olvismol*. It is apparently in excellent condition, without serious errors of transmission, although interpolations or omissions in such a poem might have been made so easily as to defy detection.

The translation of the many synonyms presents, of course, unusual difficulties, particularly as many of the Norse words can be properly rendered in English only by more or less extended phrases. I have kept to the original meanings as closely as I could without utterly destroying the metrical structure.

Hollander's Introduction (1962)

Like *Vafþrúðnismál*, this poem clearly has a didactic purpose: to impart for the use of skalds, in a form easy to memorize, a synonymic vocabulary of the *heiti*¹ (or uncommon appellations) "in all the worlds," of thirteen things.

The situation which serves as a framework for this versified scholastic lore is pleasingly told. Thor, on his return from the giant world, meets the dwarf Alvis, who, in the Thunderer's absence, has induced the gods to relinquish to him Thor's daughter and who now precipitately hurries home with her. Thor halts him, but promises his consent to the marriage providing the dwarf can answer all his questions. With these he delays Alvis until daylight surprises the dwarf and transforms him into stone.

The unusual traits attributed to Thor—cunning and eagerness for knowledge—but ill agree with the established character of the god and render the authenticity of the story questionable: it was no doubt invented *ad hoc*. Again, the fact that the material is strung along without a purposeful order, that the appellations given the various objects are not uniformly characteristic of the beings said to use them, and that it is almost hopeless to assign consistently the six beings mentioned in each stanza to specific "worlds," makes the poem approach in character the *heitatöl* (versified lists) of the Icelandic renaissance of learning in the early thirteenth century. For this reason, that century is given by the majority of scholars as the date of composition.

The text (in *ljóðahátttr* stanzas) is in good condition, due no doubt, here as elsewhere, to the regular dialogic form. It is handed down only in *Codex Regius*, but Stanzas 20 and 30 are quoted in *Skáldskaparmál*, Chaps. 56 and 60.

Thorpe (1866)	Bellows (1936)	Hollander (1962)
<p>1. Alvis The benches they are decking, Now shall the bride with me bend her way home. That beyond my strength I have hurried will to every one appear: At home naught shall disturb my quiet.</p>	<p>1. Alvis⁴ spake: "Now shall the bride⁵ my benches⁶ adorn, And homeward haste forthwith; Eager for wedlock to all shall I seem, Nor at home shall they rob me of rest."</p>	<p>1. (Alvis³⁸ said:) "To put bolster on bench³⁹ shall my bride now with me / make haste homeward; A hasty match this to many will seem: They'll not rob me my rest at home."</p>
<p>2. Vingthor What man is this? Why about the nose art thou so pale? Hast thou last night with corpses lain? To me thou seemst to bear resemblance to the Thursar. / Thou art not born to carry off a bride.</p>	<p>2. Thor spake: "What, pray, art thou? Why so pale round the nose?⁷ / By the dead hast thou lain of late? To a giant like dost thou look, methinks;⁸ Thou wast not born for the bride."</p>	<p>2. (Thor said:) "What wight is this? Why so wan about thy nose?⁴⁰ Didst dwell with the dead last night? Like to thurses methinks thou are, Nor born to have this bride."</p>
<p>3. Alvis Alvis I am named, beneath the earth I dwell, Under the rock I own a place. The lord of chariots I am come to visit. A promise once confirmed let no one break.²</p>	<p>3. Alvis spake: "Alvis am I, and under the earth My home 'neath the rocks I have; With the wagon-guider⁹ a word do I seek, Let the gods their bond not break."</p>	<p>3. (Alvis said:) "Alvis am I, dwell the earth beneath, There standeth my house under stones; (For the weapon's worth)⁴¹ to Valholl I came: Let none his bounden faith break!"</p>

<p>4. Vingthor. I will break it; for o'er the maid I have, As father, greatest power. I was from home when the promise was given thee. Among the gods I the sole giver am.</p> <p>5. Alvis What man is this, who lays claim to power Over that fair, bright maiden? For far-reaching shafts few will know thee. Who has decked thee with bracelets?</p> <p>6. Vingthor Vingthor I am named, wide I have wandered; I am Sidgrani's son: With my dissent thou shalt not that young maiden have, / Nor that union obtain.</p> <p>7. Alvis Thy consent I fain would have, And that union obtain. Rather would I possess than be without That snow-white maiden.</p> <p>8. Vingthor The maiden's love shall not, wise guest! Be unto thee denied, If thou of every world canst tell all I desire to know.</p> <p>9. Alvis Vingthor! thou canst try, as thou art desirous The knowledge of the dwarf to prove. All the nine worlds I have travelled over, And every being known.</p> <p>10. Vingthor Tell me, Alvis!—for all men's concerns I presume thee, dwarf, to know— How the earth is called, which lies before the sons of men, / In every world.</p> <p>11. Alvis <i>Jord</i> among men 'tis called, but with the <i>Æsir fold</i>; / The Vanir call it <i>vega</i>, The Jotuns <i>igroen</i>, the Alfar <i>groandi</i>, The powers supreme <i>aur</i>.</p> <p>12. Vingthor Tell me, Alvis!—for all men's concerns I presume thee, dwarf, to know— How the heaven is called, which is perceptible In every world.</p> <p>13. Alvis <i>Himinn</i> 'tis called by men; but <i>hlyrnir</i> with the gods; / <i>Vindofni</i> the Vanir call it, <i>Uppheimr</i> the Jotuns, the Alfar <i>fagararæfr</i>, The dwarfs <i>driupansal</i>.</p> <p>14. Vingthor Tell me, Alvis!—for all men's concerns I presume thee, dwarf, to know— How the moon is called, which men see In every world.</p> <p>15. Alvis <i>Mani</i> 'tis called by men, but <i>mylinn</i> with the gods, <i>Hverfanda hvel</i> in Hel³ they call it, <i>Skynði</i> the Jotuns, but the dwarfs <i>skin</i>; The Alfar name it <i>artali</i>.</p> <p>16. Vingthor Tell me, Alvis!—for all men's concerns I presume thee, dwarf, to know— How the sun is called, which men's sons see In every world.</p>	<p>4. Thor spake: "Break it shall I, for over the bride Her father has foremost right; At home was I not when the promise thou hadst, And I give her alone of the gods."¹⁰</p> <p>5. Alvis spake: "What hero¹¹ claims such right to hold O'er the bride that shines so bright? Not many will know thee, thou wandering man! Who was bought with rings to bear thee?"¹²</p> <p>6. Thor spake: "Vingthor,¹³ the wanderer wide, am I, And I am Sithgrani's¹⁴ son; Against my will shalt thou get the maid, And win the marriage word."</p> <p>7. Alvis spake: "Thy good-will now shall I quickly get, And win the marriage word; I long to have, and I would not lack, This snow-white maid for mine."</p> <p>8. Thor spake: "The love of the maid I may not keep thee From winning, thou guest so wise, If of every world¹⁵ thou canst tell me all That now I wish to know.</p> <p>16 ["Ask then, Vingthor, since eager thou art The lore of the dwarf to learn; Oft have I fared in the nine worlds all, And wide is my wisdom of each."]</p> <p>9. "Answer me, Alvis! thou knowest all, Dwarf, of the doom of men: What call they the earth, that lies before all, In each and every world?"</p> <p>10. Alvis spake: "Earth' to men, 'Field' to the gods it is, 'The Ways' is it called by the Waneg; 'Ever Green' by the giants, 'The Grower' by elves, 'The Moist' by the holy ones high."¹⁷</p> <p>11. Thor spake: "Answer me, Alvis! thou knowest all, Dwarf, of the doom of men:¹⁸ What call they the heaven, beheld¹⁹ of the high one, / In each and every world?"</p> <p>12. Alvis spake: "Heaven' men call it, 'The Height' the gods, The Waneg 'The Weaver of Winds'; Giants 'The Up-World,' elves 'The Fair-Roof,' The dwarfs 'The Dripping Hall.'"</p> <p>13. Thor spake: "Answer me, Alvis! thou knowest all, Dwarf, of the doom of men: What call they the moon, that men behold, In each and every world?"</p> <p>14. Alvis spake: "Moon' with men, 'Flame'²⁰ the gods among, 'The [Whirling] Wheel'²¹ in the house of hell; 'The Goer' the giants, 'The Gleamer' the dwarfs, The elves 'The Teller of Time.'"</p> <p>15. Thor spake: "Answer me, Alvis! thou knowest all, Dwarf, of the doom of men: What call they the sun, that all men see, In each and every world?"</p>	<p>4. (Thor said:) "I shall break it; for the bridegroom's choosing Falls as father on me; In Valholl I was not when was wedded to thee Among gods whom but I can offer."</p> <p>5. (Alvis said:) "What man is this, of the winsome maid Who feigns he is father? Thee feckless fellow but few will know: What bitch bore thee,⁴² pray?"</p> <p>6. (Thor said:) "I am high Vingthór—I have wandered far— Sithgrani's son I am; By my leave never shalt the maiden take And have her wedded wife."</p> <p>7. (Alvis said:) "Thy leave full soon thou wilt let me have, To win her as wedded wife; To marry I mean, nor to remain without, The slender, snow-white maiden."</p> <p>8. (Thor said:) "The maiden's love I shall let thee have, Thou wise guest, as thou wishest, If of every world thou canst tell me all That I list to learn.</p> <p>43 [Thou mayest ask, Vingthór, if eager thou art To learn what lore I have: The nine worlds over oft I have fared, And mindful am I of much.]</p> <p>9. "Tell me, Alvis—for all wights' fate I deem that, dwarf, thou knowest— How the earth is hight, before all outspread, In all the worlds so wide?"</p> <p>10. (Alvis said:) "Tis hight 'Earth' among men, among <i>Æsir</i>, 'Land'; / call the Vanir it 'Ways,' 'All-Green,' the etins, the alfs, 'Burgeoning,' The mighty gods, 'Mud.'"</p> <p>11. (Thor said:) "Tell me, Alvis—for all wights' fate I deem that, dwarf, thou knowest— How the heaven is hight, that to (Hronn)⁴⁴ was born, / In all the worlds so wide?"</p> <p>12. (Alvis said:) "Tis hight 'Heaven' among men, 'High-Arched' among gods; / Call the Vanir it 'Wind-Weaver,' / The etins, 'Upper World,' the alfs, 'Fair Roof,' / The dwarfs, 'Dripping Hall.'"</p> <p>13. (Thor said:) "Tell me, Alvis—for all wights' fate I deem that, dwarf, thou knowest— How the moon is hight which men do see, In all the worlds so wide?"</p> <p>14. (Alvis said:) "Tis hight 'Moon' among men, 'Mild Light'⁴⁵ among gods; call the wights in Hel it 'Wheel,' The etins, 'Speeder,' the dwarfs, 'Splendor,' And the alfs, 'Teller-of-Time.'"</p> <p>15. (Thor said:) "Tell me, Alvis—for all wights' fate I deem that, dwarf, thou knowest— How the sun is hight which is seen by men, In all the world so wide?"</p>
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<p>17. Alvis <i>Sol</i> among men 'tis called, but with the gods <i>sunna</i>, The dwarfs call it <i>Dvalinn's leika</i>, The Jotuns <i>eyglo</i>, The Alfar <i>fagrahvel</i>, The Æsir's sons <i>alskir</i>.</p> <p>18. Vingthor Tell me, Alvis!—for all men's concerns I presume thee, dwarf, to know— How the clouds are called, which with showers are mingled / In every world.</p> <p>19. Alvis <i>Sky</i> they are called by men, but <i>skurvan</i> by the gods; / The Vanir call them <i>vindflot</i>, The Jotuns <i>urvan</i>, the Alfar <i>vedrmegin</i>; In Hel they are called <i>hialm hulids</i>.</p> <p>20. Vingthor Tell me, Alvis!—for all men's concerns I presume thee, dwarf, to know— How the wind is called, which widely passes Over every world.</p> <p>21. Alvis <i>Windr</i> 'tis called by men, but <i>vavudr</i> by the gods, The wide-ruling powers call it <i>gneggiud</i>, The Jotuns <i>oepir</i>, the Alfar <i>dynfari</i>, In Hel they call it <i>hvidudr</i>.</p> <p>22. Vingthor Tell me, Alvis!—for all men's concerns I presume thee, dwarf, to know— How the calm is called, which has to rest In every world.</p> <p>23. Alvis <i>Logn</i> 'tis called by men, but <i>lægi</i> by the gods, The Vanir call it <i>vindslot</i>, The Jotuns <i>ofhly</i>, the Alfar <i>dagsevi</i>, The Dwarfs call it <i>dags vera</i>.</p> <p>24. Vingthor Tell me, Alvis!—for all men's concerns I presume thee, dwarf, to know— What the sea is called, which men row over In every world.</p> <p>25. Alvis <i>Sær</i> 'tis called by men, but <i>silægia</i> with the gods; The Vanir call it <i>vagr</i>, The Jotuns <i>alheimr</i>, the Alfar <i>lagastafr</i>, The Dwarfs call it <i>diupan mar</i>.</p> <p>26. Vingthor Tell me, Alvis!—for all men's concerns I presume thee, dwarf, to know— How the fire is called, which burns before men's sons / In every world.</p> <p>27. Alvis <i>Eldr</i> 'tis called by men, but by the Æsir <i>funi</i>; The Vanir call it <i>vagr</i>, The Jotuns <i>frekr</i>, but the Dwarfs <i>forbrennir</i>; In Hel they call it <i>hrodudr</i>.</p> <p>28. Vingthor Tell me, Alvis!—for all men's concerns I presume thee, dwarf, to know— How the forest is called, which grows for the sons of men / In every world.</p> <p>29. Alvis <i>Vidr</i> 'tis called by men, but <i>vallarfax</i> by the gods, Hel's inmates call it <i>hlidhangr</i>, The Jotuns <i>eldi</i>, the Alfar <i>fagrlimi</i>; The Vanir call it <i>vondr</i>.</p>	<p>16. Alvis spake: "Men call it 'Sun,' gods 'Orb of the Sun,' 'The Deceiver of Dvalin'²² the dwarfs; The giants 'The Ever-Bright,' elves 'Fair Wheel,' 'All-Glowing' the sons of the gods."</p> <p>17. Thor spake: "Answer me, Alvis! thou knowest all, Dwarf, of the doom of men: What call they the clouds, that keep the rains, In each and every world?"</p> <p>18. Alvis spake: "Clouds' men name them, 'Rain-Hope' gods call them, / The Waners call them 'Kites of the Wind'; 'Water-Hope' giants, 'Weather-Might' elves, 'The Helmet of Secrets' in hell."</p> <p>19. Thor spake: "Answer me, Alvis! thou knowest all, Dwarf, of the doom of men: What call they the wind, that widest fares, In each and every world?"</p> <p>20.²³ Alvis spake: "Wind' do men call it, the gods 'The Waverer,'²⁴ 'The Neigher' the holy ones high; 'The Wailer' the giants, 'Roaring Wender' the elves, / In hell 'The Blustering Blast.'²⁵</p> <p>21. Thor spake: "Answer me, Alvis! thou knowest all Dwarf, of the doom of men: What call they the calm, that quiet lies, In each and every world?"</p> <p>22. Alvis spake: "Calm' men call it, 'The Quiet' the gods, The Waners 'The Hush of the Winds';²⁶ 'The Sultry' the giants, elves 'Day's Stillness,' The dwarfs 'The Shelter of Day.'</p> <p>23. Thor spake: "Answer me, Alvis! thou knowest all, Dwarf, of the doom of men: What call they the sea, whereon men sail, In each and every world?"</p> <p>24. Alvis spake: "Sea' men call it, gods 'The Smooth-Lying,' 'The Wave' is it called by the Waners; 'Eel-Home' the giants, 'Drink-Stuff'²⁷ the elves, For the dwarfs its name is 'The Deep.'</p> <p>25. Thor spake: "Answer me, Alvis! thou knowest all, Dwarf, of the doom of men: What call they the fire, that flames for men, In each of all the worlds?"</p> <p>26. Alvis spake: "Fire' men call it, and 'Flame' the gods, By the Waners is it 'Wildfire'²⁸ called; 'The Biter' by giants, 'The Burner' by dwarfs, 'The Swift' in the house of hell."</p> <p>27. Thor spake: "Answer me, Alvis! thou knowest all, Dwarf, of the doom of men: What call they the wood, that grows for mankind, In each and every world?"</p> <p>28. Alvis spake: "Men call it 'The Wood, gods 'The Mane of the Field,' / 'Seaweed of Hills' in hell;²⁹ 'Flame-Food' the giants, 'Fair-Limbed' the elves, 'The Wand' is it called by the Waners."</p>	<p>16. (Alvis said:) "Tis hight 'Sun' among men, but 'Sunlight' among gods; Call the Dwarves it 'Dvalin's Doom,'⁴⁶ / The etins, 'Everglow,' the alfs, 'Fair Wheel,' / 'All-Bright,' the Ása-Sons."</p> <p>17. (Thor said:) "Tell me, Alvis—for all wights' fate I deem that, dwarf, thou knowest— How the clouds are hight that carry showers, In all the world so wide?"</p> <p>18. (Alvis said:) "Tis hight 'Clouds,' among men, 'Rain-Carriers' among gods; / Call the Vanir them 'Windblown,' The etins, 'Rain-Hope,' the alfs, 'Weather-Might,' The Hel-Dwellers, 'Hiding Helm.'"</p> <p>19. (Thor said:) "Tell me, Alvis—for all wights' fate I deem that, dwarf, thou knowest— How the wind is hight which widest fares, In all the worlds so wide?"</p> <p>20. (Alvis said:) "Tis hight 'Wind' among men, but 'Wafter' among gods; / Call the most high it 'Whinnier,' The etins, 'Roarer,' the alfs, 'Din Farer,' The Hel-Dwellers, 'Whistler.'"</p> <p>21. (Thor said:) "Tell me, Alvis—for all wights' fate I deem that, dwarf, thou knowest— How the calm is hight which quietly lies, In all the worlds so wide?"</p> <p>22. (Alvis said:) "Tis hight 'Calm' among men, 'Sea-Quiet' among gods; / Call the Vanir it 'Wind-Lull,' The etins, 'Sultry,' the alfs, 'Day-Balm,' The dwarfs, 'the Day's Haven.'"</p> <p>23. (Thor said:) "Tell me, Alvis—for all wights' fate I deem that, dwarf, thou knowest— How the sea is hight which is sailed by men, In all the worlds so wide?"</p> <p>24. (Alvis said:) "Tis hight 'Sea' among men, 'Main' among gods; Call the Vanir it 'Wave,' The etins, 'Eel-Home,' the alfs, 'Water'; Call the dwarfs it 'the Deep.'"</p> <p>25. (Thor said:) "Tell me, Alvis—for all wights' fate I deem that, dwarf, thou knowest— How the fire is hight which flames among men, In all the worlds so wide?"</p> <p>26. (Alvis said:) "Tis hight 'Fire' among men, but 'Flame' among gods; Call the Vanir it 'Warmth,' The etins 'Greedy,' 'All-Devourer,' the dwarfs, The Hel-Wights, 'Fast Whelmer.'"</p> <p>27. (Thor said:) "Tell me, Alvis—for all wights' fate I deem that, dwarf, thou knowest— How the wood is hight, in men's world that grows, In all the worlds so wide?"</p> <p>28. (Alvis said:) "Tis hight 'Wood' among men, 'Earth's Mane' among gods; / Call the Hel-Wights⁴⁷ it 'Seaweed- of-Slopes,' / The etins 'Firewood,' the alfs, 'Fair Bough,' / Call the Vanir it 'Wand.'"</p>
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<p>30. Vingthor Tell me, Alvis!—for all men's concerns I presume thee, dwarf, to know— How the night is called, that Norvi's daughter hight, In every world.</p>	<p>29. Thor spake: "Answer me, Alvis! thou knowest all, Dwarf, of the doom of men: What call they the night, the daughter of Nor,³⁰ In each and every world?"</p>	<p>29. (Thor said:) "Tell me, Alvis—for all wights' fate I deem that, dwarf, thou knowest— How the night is hight, which to Nor was born, In all the worlds so wide?"</p>
<p>31. Alvis <i>Nott</i> it is called by men, but by the gods <i>niol</i>; The wide-ruling powers call it <i>grima</i>, The Jotuns <i>olios</i>, the Alfar <i>svefngaman</i>; The Dwarfs call it <i>draumniorunn</i>.</p>	<p>30.³¹ Alvis spake: "'Night' men call it, 'Darkness' gods name it, 'The Hood' the holy ones high; The giants 'The Lightless,'³² the elves 'Sleep's joy" The dwarfs 'The Weaver of Dreams.'"</p>	<p>30. (Alvis said:) "'Tis hight 'Night' among men, but 'Murk' among gods; / Call the mighty powers it 'Mask,' The etins, 'Lightless,' the alfs, 'Sleep's Ease,' The dwarfs, 'Weaver-of-Dreams.'"</p>
<p>32. Vingthor Tell me, Alvis!—for all men's concerns I presume thee, dwarf, to know— How the seed is called, which the sons of men sow In every world.</p>	<p>31. Thor spake: "Answer me, Alvis! thou knowest all, Dwarf, of the doom of men: What call they the seed, that is sown by men, In each and every world?"</p>	<p>31. (Thor said:) "Tell me, Alvis—for all wights' fate I deem that, dwarf, thou knowest— How the seed is hight, which is sowed by men, In all the worlds so wide?"</p>
<p>33. Alvis <i>Bygg</i> it is called by men, but by the gods <i>barr</i>, The Vanir call it <i>vaxtr</i>, The Jotuns <i>æti</i>, the Alfar <i>lagastafr</i>; In Hel 'tis <i>hnipinn</i> called.</p>	<p>32. Alvis spake: "Men call it 'Grain,' and 'Corn' the gods,³³ 'Growth' in the world of the Wanæs; 'The Eaten' by giants, 'Drink-Stuff'³⁴ by elves, In hell 'The Slender Stem.'</p>	<p>32. (Alvis said:) "'Tis hight 'Barley' among men, but 'Breadstuff'⁴⁸ among gods; / Call the Vanir it 'Well-Grown,' The etins, 'Eating,' the alf-kin, 'Grain,' The wights of Hel, 'Hanging.'"⁴⁹</p>
<p>Vingthor_ Tell me, Alvis!—for all men's concerns I presume thee, dwarf, to know— How the beer is called, which the sons of men drink in every world.</p>	<p>33. Thor spake: "Answer me, Alvis! thou knowest all, Dwarf, of the doom of men: What call they the ale, that is quaffed of men, In each and every world?"</p>	<p>33. (Thor said:) "Tell me, Alvis—for all wights' fate I deem that, dwarf, thou knowest— How the beer is hight, which is brewed by men, In all the worlds so wide?"</p>
<p>35. Alvis <i>Ol</i> it is called by men, but by the Æsir <i>biorr</i>, The Vanir call it <i>veig</i>, <i>hreina logr</i> the Jotuns, But in Hel 'tis called <i>miodr</i>: Suttung's sons call it <i>sumbl</i>.</p>	<p>34. Alvis spake: "'Ale' among men, 'Beer' the gods among, In the world of the Wanæs 'The Foaming'; 'Bright Draught' with giants, 'Mead' with dwellers in hell, / 'The Feast-Draught' with Suttung's sons."³⁵</p>	<p>34. (Alvis said:) "'Tis hight 'Ale' among men, among Æsir, 'Beer'; Call the Vanir it 'Wassail Brew,' 'Clear Must,' the etins, 'Mead,' the Hel-Wights, The sons of Suttung,⁵⁰ 'Feast Draught.'"</p>
<p>36. Vingthor In one breast I have never found more ancient lore. By great wiles thou hast, I tell thee, been deluded. Thou art above ground, dwarf! at dawn; Already in the hall the sun is shining!</p>	<p>35. Thor spake: "In a single breast I never have seen More wealth of wisdom old; But with treacherous wiles must I now betray thee: The day has caught thee, dwarf!³⁶ (Now the sun shines here in the hall.)"³⁷</p>	<p>35. (Thor said:) "I never learned like lore to dwell In the breast of any wight born; With wily words outwitted thou art: Above ground finds thee, dwarf, the day; Now the sun is seen in thy hall."</p>

¹ According to Olrik, these words are not so much skaldic terms as noa words for tabu objects, and show similarity to expressions still used among Shetland fishermen. But the reason for putting them together remains the one indicated above.

² This appears to allude to a promise made to the dwarf; but of which the story is lost.

³ When this composition was written, it appears that Hel was no longer regarded as a person, but as a place.

⁴ Alvis ("All-Knowing"): a dwarf, not elsewhere mentioned. The manuscript nowhere indicates the speakers' name.

⁵ The bride in question is Thor's daughter; Thruth ("Might") is the only daughter of his whose name is recorded, and she does not appear elsewhere in the poems. Her mother was Sif, Thor's wife, whereas the god's sons were born of a giantess.

⁶ Benches: cf. *Lokasenna*, 15 and note.

⁷ The dwarfs, living beyond the reach of the sun, which was fatal to them (cf. stanzas 16 and 35), were necessarily pale.

⁸ Line 3 is, of course, ironical.

⁹ Wagon-guider: Thor, who travels habitually on his goat drawn wagon. Bugge changes "Vagna vets" to "Vapna verys," rendering the line "I am come to seek the cost of the weapons." In either case, Alvis does not as yet recognize Thor.

¹⁰ Apparently the gods promised Thor's daughter in marriage to Alvis during her father's absence, perhaps as a reward for some craftsmanship of his (cf. Bugge's suggestion as to stanza 3). The text of line 4 is most uncertain.

¹¹ Hero: ironically spoken; Alvis takes Thor for a tramp, the god's uncouth appearance often leading to such mistakes; cf. *Harbarthsljóth*, 6.

¹² Line 4 is a trifle uncertain; some editors alter the wording to read "What worthless woman bore thee?"

¹³ Vingthor ("Thor the Hurler"): cf. *Thrymskvitha*, 1.

¹⁴ Sithgrani ("Long-Beard"): Othin.

¹⁵ Every world: concerning the nine worlds, cf. *Voluspo*, 2 and note.

¹⁶ Many editors follow the preceding stanza with the following one spoken by Alvis, found in late paper manuscripts.

¹⁷ Men, etc.: nothing could more clearly indicate the author's mythological inaccuracy than his confusion of the inhabitants of the nine worlds. Men (dwellers in Mithgarth) appear in each of Alvis's thirteen answers; so do the gods (Asgarth) and the giants (Jotunheim). The elves (Alfheim) appear in eleven answers, the Wanæs (Vanaheim) in nine, and the dwarfs (who occupied no special world, unless one identifies them with the dark elves of Svartalfaheim) in seven. The dwellers "in hell" appear in six stanzas; the phrase probably refers to the world of the dead, though Mogk thinks it may mean the dwarfs. In stanzas where the gods are already listed appear names elsewhere applied only to them,— "holy ones," "sons of the gods" and "high ones,"—as if these names meant beings of a separate race. "Men" appears twice in the same stanza, and so do the giants, if one assumes that they are "the sons of Suttung." Altogether it is useless to pay much attention to the mythology of Alvis's replies.

¹⁸ Lines 1, 2, and 4 of Thor's questions are regularly abbreviated in the manuscript.

¹⁹ Beheld, etc.: the word in the manuscript is almost certainly an error, and all kinds of guesses have been made to rectify it. All that can be said is that it means "beheld of" or "known to" somebody.

²⁰ Flame: a doubtful word; Vigfusson suggests that it properly means a "mock sun."

²¹ Wheel: the manuscript adds the adjective "whirling," to the destruction of the metre; cf. *Hovamol*, 84, 3.

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- ²² Deceiver of Dvalin: Dvalin was one of the foremost dwarfs; cf. *Voluspo*, 14, *Fafnismol*, 13, and *Hovamol*, 144. The sun "deceives" him because, like the other dwarfs living under ground, he cannot live in its light, and always fears lest sunrise may catch him unaware. The sun's rays have power to turn the dwarfs into stone, and the giantess Hrimgerth meets a similar fate (cf. *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar*, 30). Alvis suffers in the same way; cf. stanza 35.
- ²³ Snorri quotes this stanza in the *Skaldskaparmal*.
- ²⁴ Waverer: the word is uncertain, the *Prose Edda* manuscripts giving it in various forms.
- ²⁵ Blustering Blast: two *Prose Edda* manuscripts give a totally different word, meaning "The Pounder."
- ²⁶ Hush, etc.: the manuscript, by inserting an additional letter, makes the word practically identical with that translated "Kite" in stanza 18. Most editors have agreed as to the emendation.
- ²⁷ Drink-Stuff: Gering translates the word thus; I doubt it, but can suggest nothing better.
- ²⁸ Wildfire: the word may mean any one of various things, including "Wave," which is not unlikely.
- ²⁹ In hell: the word simply means "men," and it is only a guess, though a generally accepted one, that here it refers to the dead.
- ³⁰ Nor: presumably the giant whom Snorri calls Norvi or Narfi, father of Not (Night) and grandfather of Dag (Day). Cf. *Vafthruthnismol*, 25.
- ³¹ Snorri quotes this stanza in the *Skaldskaparmal*. The various *Prose Edda* manuscripts differ considerably in naming the gods, the giants, etc.
- ³² Lightless: some manuscripts have "The Unsorrowing."
- ³³ Grain: the two words translated "grain" and "corn" apparently both meant primarily barley, and thence grain in general, the first being the commoner term of the two.
- ³⁴ Drink-Stuff: the word is identical with the one used, and commented on, in stanza 24, and again I have followed Gering's interpretation for want of a better one. If his guess is correct, the reference here is evidently to grain as the material from which beer and other drinks are brewed.
- ³⁵ Suttung's sons: these ought to be the giants, but the giants are specifically mentioned in line 3. The phrase "Suttung's sons" occurs in *Skirnismol*, 34, clearly meaning the giants. Concerning Suttung as the possessor of the mead of poetry, cf. *Hovamol*, 104.
- ³⁶ Concerning the inability of the dwarfs to endure sunlight, which turns them into stone, cf. stanza 16 and note.
- ³⁷ Line 5 may be spurious.
- ³⁸ "The Allwise."
- ³⁹ One of the duties of the housewife, especially for a festive welcome. See *Baldrs draumar*, St.6, and *Brymskviða*, St.22.
- ⁴⁰ A natural condition for a chthonic being [i.e. "of the earth," that is, subterranean dwellers].
- ⁴¹ Accepting Bugge's ingenious emendation: Thor's hammer Mjølfnir (as well as Othin's spear, Gungnir) was made by the dwarfs, whose payment is opposed by Thor. But the line may also mean: "To Valholl I came | to visit Thrúthheim" (Thor's dwelling in Ásgarh. See *Grimnismál*, St.4).
- ⁴² Accepting Pipping's interpretation.
- ⁴³ Here the paper manuscripts insert the bracketed stanza, generally regarded as spurious and unnecessary.
- ⁴⁴ Translated according to Bugge's daring emendation. Hronn, "billow," is one of Ægir's daughters and, hence, may stand for "the sea": in late Classical mythology, the sea goddess, Tethys, is the mother of the sky.
- ⁴⁵ Conjectural.
- ⁴⁶ Dvalin is a dwarf. The kenning is illustrated by the fate of Alvis himself (St.35 below) and by *Helgakviða Hjorvarþssonar*, Sts.29-30.
- ⁴⁷ Conjectural.
- ⁴⁸ Transposed here from line 3.
- ⁴⁹ For its drooping ears.
- ⁵⁰ The giants. See *Hávamál*, St.104.