

The ‘short’ vowels in Figure 6.1 are transcribed in an IPA form, while the ‘long’ vowels are marked with the length diacritic (:). This is a typographical convenience, which allows one to identify more readily the lineage of short and long vowels and their eligibility for specific historical processes. PDE contrastive diphthongs are functionally the same as the long vowels.

Turning back to OE, we follow the long tradition of separating the short from the long vowels and diphthongs. Wherever relevant, the descriptive parameters in Figure 6.1 – height, backness and rounding – are also preserved. As in the idealised system shown for PDE, the OE vowel system is idealised in that it is based on classical and late West Saxon, the variety from which the most written materials survive. It is also the variety of OE that is most commonly used for etymological references. Since the focus of this book is to trace the major patterns of correspondences between OE and PDE and to place the ‘outliers’ in a historical context, details regarding the OE dialects are avoided. A note of warning is due, however: the West Saxon OE, on which the Anglo-Saxon grammars written in the last two centuries draw, does not have a direct and localisable linear descendant. With this disclaimer in mind, Figure 6.2 presents an overview of the (late) OE vowels:

		Short vowels			Long vowels			Diphthongs	
		<i>Front</i>		<i>Central</i>	<i>Back</i>	<i>Front</i>			<i>Back</i>
		<i>Unround</i>	<i>Round</i>	ə		<i>Unround</i>	<i>Round</i>		
<i>High</i>	<i>Upper</i>				ə		i:	y:	u:
	<i>Lower</i>	ɪ	ʏ	ʊ					
<i>Mid</i>	<i>Upper</i>			ə		e:	o:		eə
	<i>Lower</i>	ɛ			ɔ				
<i>Low</i>		æ		ɑ		æ:	ɔ:		æə

Figure 6.2 An overview of late Old English vowels

All vowels except for the central [ə] appear as nuclei of stressed syllables. The IPA symbols used for OE are familiar from Fig. 6.1, except for [ʏ] and [y:], which are not found in SSBE and GA. The ‘small capital Y’ stands for a lower high rounded vowel, a counterpart of unrounded ‘small capital I’. The pronunciation of [ʏ] in OE is as the <ü> in German *küssen* ‘to kiss’, *Münster* ‘minster’, or as <u> in French *début* ‘debut’. The pronunciation of the long front rounded vowel [y:] is as in German *kühl* ‘cool’ or French *jugé* ‘judge’.