Ending Letters

Letters at the end of words (and especially at the end of a line) sometimes have elaborate flourishes that you might think at first glance are separate letters, as in the name Baltazar below:

Baltazar

Certain ending letters present special problems. Most Spanish given names end in a or o. Handwritten a's and o's are easy to confuse. The only difference between them is the tail on the a's. Some scribes may not have made the tail distinct; others may have added flourishes to their o's that could be mistaken for tails. Because the last letter of a person's given name may be the only indication of the person's sex, it is critical that you transcribe the letter accurately. Take your time, and compare the last letter of a name with letters you are sure of.

A similar situation exists with Spanish surnames. Many end in g. But z, s, and c were interchangeable, and, as noted above, s and z may resemble each other. Again, compare, compare, and then compare some more. If you still cannot determine what the letter is, make it an s.
Minims

The up-and-down strokes of letters are called minims. The letters i, m, n, u, v, and w are composed mostly of minims. When a word has two or more of these letters in a row, the letters can be hard to tell apart, as in the word mueve below:

\[\text{mueve}\]

Self-Evaluation
Transcribe the following words. Then check your answers.

1. Trinidad

2. puse los stos oleos y Sagrada Xma.

3. Ma. Rosario

4. D. Juan Bautista Valdes

5. Testigos Lorenzo Manrique

Answers
1. Trinidad  2. puse los stos oleos y Sagrada Xma.

Linking Strokes

Some Spanish scribes joined letters differently from the way we do today. We usually join letters with a short, counterclockwise curve (\(\swarrow\)). For example, we would write ni as \(\ni\). The linking strokes of some scribes, however, curve the opposite way (\(\searrow\)). These linking strokes can be particularly confusing when they link letters composed of minims. For example, some scribes wrote ni as \(\ni\). If you were not careful, you might mistake these two letters for the letter m.

Other scribes joined letters with very complete strokes that at first might seem to have the value of distinct letters. For instance, in the word Juan below, the letters am could be mistaken for am:

\[\text{Juan}\]

Some scribes joined letters in different places from what you might expect. For example, they may have joined t's to their following letters at the top of the d, or they may have joined t's to their following letters at the cross stroke. Thus, they may have written di as \(\di\) rather than \(\di\), or they may have written tu as \(\tu\) rather than \(\tu\).

In modern handwriting, in the letters ch, the c is joined to the h at the bottom: \(\text{ch}\). But in some records, especially those before 1700, the c is joined to the h at the top: \(\text{ch}\). As you can see, the h in these combinations is often the secretary h described earlier.

We usually join o's to letters with a short, horizontal stroke at the top of the o: \(\text{o}\). Some scribes may have left out this stroke, as in the first example below. Others may have lowered the stroke to the point where it is hard to tell their o's from a's, as in the second example below:

\[\text{Corre} \quad \text{Confe} \quad \text{dos} \quad \text{dos}\]
The Word "de"

Because the word de ("of" or "from") was used so
frequently, many scribes wrote it in a kind of shorthand
notation. Compare the various forms of de given below:

Self-Evaluation
Transcribe the following words. Then check your answers.

1. Con Nicolosa Pasquala
2. desde presente año
3. Pedro
4. Martín Rodríguez
5. Christina
6. El bote, día nacido
7. D. Anna Gertrudis Fernández
8. Bauticé puse olío y crisma
9. Ensietede maio
10. Depredes maldonado

Answers
1. Con Nicolosa Pasquala
2. desde presente año
3. Pedro
4. Martín Rodríguez
5. Christina
6. de
7. D. Anna Gertrudis Fernández
8. Bauticé puse olío y crisma
9. Ensietede maio
10. de
   pedro maldonado