

'Baron' Felix Volkbein

# Mother: Hedvig Volkbien

‘A Viennese woman of great strength and military beauty’ (3).

‘in massive and tarnished gold threads, stood the Volkbien arms’ (3).



The arms of the House of Hapsburg

## Father: Guido Volkbien

- 'A Jew of Italian descent... both a gourmet and a dandy' (4)
- 'Childless at fifty-nine, Guide had prepared out of his own heart for his coming child a heart, fashioned on his own preoccupation, the remorseless homage to nobility' (5)
- 'The saddest and most futile gesture of all had been his pretence to a barony. He had adopted the sign of the cross; he had said he wan Austrian of an old, almost extinct line, producing, to uphold his story, the most amazing and inaccurate proofs: a coat of arms that he had no right to and a list of progenitors...who had never existed' (5-6).

# 'Baron' Felix Volkbein Himself

- 'His embarrassment took the form of an obsession for what he termed "Old Europe": aristocracy, nobility, royalty. He spoke any given title with a pause before and after the name... with the fury of a fanatic he hunted down his own disqualification, rearticulating the bones of the Imperial Courts long forgotten' (11-12).
- 'I was not thinking of [Vienna's] young boys, but of its military superiority, it's great names' (21).
- 'He wished a son who would feel as he felt about the "great past"' (42).

# Guido II Volkbein - Son of Felix

- 'The child was small, a boy, and sad. It slept too much in a quivering palsy of nerves; it made few voluntary movements; it whimpered' (52).
- 'When Guido had first spoken of wishing to enter the church, Felix had been startled out of himself. He knew that Guido was not like other children, that he would always be too estranged to be argued with; in accepting his son the Baron saw that he must accept a demolition of his own life' (115).
- 'Guido is very sensitive to animals, and I could fancy what was going on in his mind; he is not like other children, not cruel, or savage. For this very reason he is called 'strange'.' (112-123).