MUSIC, MAGIC AND POSTMODERN HISTORICAL METAFICTION: HELMUTH KRAUSSER’S ‘MELODIEN’ (1993)

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It is well known that in the protomodern period music was studied as part of the cosmic order and theories of music were connected to astronomy, mathematics and other, superior forms of natural philosophy. In the Renaissance, from Francesco Giorgi’s *De harmonia mundi totius* (1525) to Johannes Kepler’s *Harmonices mundi* (1619) music was discussed within the framework of the Great Chain of Being as well as the universal correspondences. In a world, which was looked at and interpreted through analogies and correspondences, it was only natural that music was also associated with magic, sympathetic as well as ceremonial.

Having all the above in mind as a background, my paper is going to deal with a modern novel, Helmut Krausser’s *Melodien oder Nachträge zum Quecksilbernen Zeitalter* (1993) which may be classified as postmodern historical metafiction, touching upon alchemy, mystical-magical theories and praxis of music, and other occult lore of the early modern period. The historical narrative is framed by a story of modern academics studying all this with various purposes.

**The Protomodern Theoretical Framework**

If we examine protomodern theories of music we can arrive at a typology according to which the esoteric properties of music are related to three connecting areas: first is the interconnectedness of musical proportions and the structure of the cosmos; second is the idea that music has magical creative energy, and even the cosmos was created by divine music; finally, the third is related to the physical or psychological power of music over human individuals.

The idea that musical and cosmic harmony are of the same kind roots in ancient Greek thought. According to tradition it was Pythagoras who for the first time discovered that a musical scale on a monochord coincides with strict arithmetical and geometrical proportions. As on a 13th-century Cistercian manuscript (from Alderspach,
(Germany) one can see Pythagoras giving advise how to create a proper monochord following the rules of mathematical proportions. This idea lead Robert Fludd to propose in his *Utriusque cosmi historia* (1617) that the whole universe has been created and functions as a gigantic, cosmic monochord.