

# Bronnen en meningen over Drebbel.

20<sup>e</sup> en 21<sup>e</sup> eeuw

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Francis Franck, juli 2013

Over Cornelis Drebbel is in de loop der eeuwen veel geschreven. Sinds enkele jaren zijn veel van deze documenten en informatiebronnen via internet toegankelijk gemaakt. In onderstaande compilatie heb ik getracht een overzicht van te geven van de publicaties van de voorbije 110 jaar. Deze periode begint met de lof van Naber in "[De ster van 1572](#)" in 1906 en Jaeger's negatieve visie in "[Cornelis Drebbel en zijn tijdgenooten](#)" uit 1922. Dat laatste, geringschattende beeld wordt goed geïllustreerd in de vertekende - voornamelijk op Jaeger gebaseerde - biografie van Drebbel in het "[Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek](#)" uit 1924: "*In geen enkel opzicht kan hij m.i. gelden als een der promotoren der 17e eeuwse natuurwetenschap*".

Deze inbreuk op Drebbel's goede naam was dan weer de aanleiding voor [de kruistocht van Naber](#) van 1923 tot 1943 en de oprichting van het Eerste Drebbelgenootschap. In die periode verscheen ook het redelijk objectieve proefschrift [Cornelis Drebbel](#) van Gerrit Tierie (1932).

In de tweede helft van de 20<sup>e</sup> eeuw wordt door veel auteurs weer meer wetenschappelijk naar Drebbel gekeken, getuige de hiernavolgende lijst.

NOTA: Raadpleeg in aanvulling op dit document ook

- "[Bronnen en meningen over Drebbel in de 17<sup>e</sup> eeuw.](#)"
- "[Bronnen en meningen over Drebbel in de 18<sup>e</sup> en 19<sup>e</sup> eeuw.](#)" en
- "[NL over Drebbel in de 18<sup>o</sup> en 19<sup>o</sup> eeuw](#)"

V - klik op de titel om het artikel te lezen

1937	H.W. Dickinson - Imperial College	Vitriol making in England
1955	Rosalie L. Colie	Cornelis Drebbel and Salomon de Caus: Two Jacobean Models for Salomon's House
1961	The Two NL	Positieve visie op het Perpetuum Mobile.
1977	J.W. van Spronsen - J. of Chem. Education	Cornelis Drebbel and Oxygen
1986	Th.B. Roep	De Koningsweg te Alkmaar door de eeuwen heen
1990	H. van Onna	Brief aan NRC
1990	H. van Onna	Eltham Palace
1992	H. van Onna	Een saluut aan Dr. Naber
1993	H.A.M. Snelders	De geschiedenis van de scheikunde in Nederland.
1997	Z. Szydlo and R. Brzezinski	A New Light on Alchemy, Sendevogius and oxygen
1997	H. van Onna	Praag rond 1660, Rudolf II en Drebbel
1997	Dr. James Bradburne	Art, science, and culture at the court of Rudolph II
1998	H. van Onna	Drebbel Brochure
1998 ?	Dr Robert A. Hatch	The Scientific Revolution
1999	Klaas van Berkel e.a.	Biografie in History of Science in the NL
1999	Tom Shachtman	Absolute Zero and the Conquest of Cold (uittreksel)
2001	Stephen D. Norton	Cornelis Drebbel, science and Its Times: Understanding the Social Significance of Scientific Discovery
2002	Rienk Vermij	About Drebbel in "The Calvinist Copernicans"
2003	Jeroen Overmars	Wetenschaps- en techniekcultuur in NL en UK 1572-1633
2003	Lynn Thorndike	History of Magic and Experimental Science
2004	Donna Coffey	Scientific Spectacle in Bacon's New Atlantis
2004	M. Mollona	Drebbel and the Steam Engine
2004	M. Hill and A. Dronsfield	Who discovered Oxygen?
2004	H. van Onna	En ook de uitvinder van de airco ...
2005	Amy Butler Greenfield	Het Volmaakte Rood
2006	Arianna Borrelli	THE WEATHERGLASS AND ITS OBSERVERS
2006	Dr. James Bradburne	Going through the motions
2006	Andrew Cantor	What it takes to get a breath of fresh air
2006	George Goodall	Hagiography: the de Caus Clan
2007	John Young	A letter from Michael Sendivogius to Vincenzo II Gonzaga
2007	Rienk Vermij	About Drebbel in "Putting the Earth in Heaven, Philips Lansbergen"
2007	H.R. SantaColoma	The Voynich Manuscript: Drebbel's Lost Notebook?
2007	Dr. James Bradburne	Local Heros - Memory in action in the late Renaissance Garden
2007	B. White and W. Woodward	William White en Drebbel
2007	Zbigniew SZYDŁO	WHO DISCOVERED OXYGEN?

2008	meerdere (uitgeverij Conserve)	Schrijvers over Alkmaar
2008	BBC Radio	The court of Rudolf II
2008	H. van Onna	De conste van verre saecken naerby te sien
2008	Matthias Bruhn	Spannungen, Entladungen. Evolutionen und Revolutionen kollektiven Sehens (over Camera Obscura)
< 2009	IPA	Cornelis Jacobszoon Drebbel, pyrotechnicus
2009	H.R. SantaColoma - Wikipedia	Het Voynich manuscript
2009	H. van Onna	Het Volmaakte Rood
2009, november	various	Drebbel in het Russisch
2010 ?	Gerard Peeters	CD, de man die te vroeg de duikboot uitvond
2010	Vera Keller	DREBBEL'S LIVING INSTRUMENTS
2010	Vera Keller	C. Drebbel, de Einstein van zijn tijd (conclus.)
2010	Zbigniew Herbert	Perpetuum Mobile
2011	Achim Clausing	Drebbel werd geloofd en verguisd. Waarom?
2012	H. van Onna	Drebbel's biografie
2013	Rich SantaColoma	Constructive references to Drebbel and his Perpetuum Mobile.
?	Alexander Pavlov	Russisch stuk over zuurstof en lof voor Drebbel.

Man nannte ihn den "holländischen Archimedes ", den "Meister der künstlichen und natürlichen Dinge". Noch Jahrzehnte später schrieb der große Philosoph und Mathematiker Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646 – 1716) voller Achtung von »le fameux Drebbel«, dem berühmten Drebbel. Doch im Jahrhundert nach Cornelis Drebbels Tod – er starb 1633 – verblasste sein Ruhm. Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts widmete der Dresdner Oberbibliothekar Johann Christoph Adelung ihm schließlich in seiner achtbändigen »Geschichte der menschlichen Narrheit « ein Kapitel unter der Überschrift »Cornelius van Drebbel, ein Charlatan«.

Wer war dieser Cornelis Jacobszoon Drebbel, über den es in deutscher Sprache keine Biografie und keine wissenschaftliche Untersuchung gibt? Seine Gestalt, schillernd zwischen Genie und Hochstapler, trägt faustische Züge. Als mittelalterlicher Alchemist und moderner Erfinder, Erfolgsautor, Unterhaltungs-künstler und Unternehmer verkehrte er an den Höfen von Königen und Kaisern, wurde eingekerkert und angeblich einmal um ein Haar hingerichtet.

Die Liste der ihm zugeschriebenen Erfindungen ist eindrucksvoll...

**1 Cornelis Jacobszoon Drebbel** (1572 – 1633) aus Alkmaar in den Niederlanden war zu Lebzeiten ein in ganz Europa berühmter **Erfinder**, der an den Höfen von London und Prag für Aufsehen und Unterhaltung sorgte.

**2** Vor allem Drebbels »**Perpetuum mobile**« – eine atmosphärische Uhr, die Ebbe und Flut anzeigte – begründete seinen europaweiten Ruf. Daneben baute er unter anderem ein **Unterseeboot** und eines der ersten **Mikroskope**.

**3** Doch schon bald nach Drebbels Tod verblasste sein Ruhm. Die Nachgeborenen sahen in ihm bloß einen **Scharlatan**. Heute ist der ungemein kreative Erfinder fast völlig vergessen.

Über Drebbels Konstruktion urteilte 1765 der Erfurter Pastor Georg Heinrich Büchner, dahinter müsse entweder Alchemie oder »Prahlerey« gesteckt haben. Schnell stand das postume Urteil fest: Der Mann sei ein »Windmacher« und »een grote Ezel« gewesen.

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- [Genie oder Scharlatan? Der vergessene Pionier der Moderne Cornelis Jacobszoon Drebbel](#)
  - [Wissenschafts geschichte Cornelis Drebbel: Ein vergessener Pionier der Moderne](#)

2011 [Achim Clausing](#)

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Cornelius Drebbel probably ranks as one of the most under appreciated figures of the Renaissance. Artist, engraver, alchemist, inventor, showman & manufacturer, his rude demeanor and odd manners seems to have kept him from true recognition as the brilliant mind he was. His genius was admired by the off-beat Emperor Rudolf II, but treated as a lesser amusement, despite signs of tremendous promise, by King James of England. At the funeral of James, Drebbel was there, but walked with the court jesters.

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So, the above evidence of contemporaries of Cornelius van Drebbel suggest that he was not only far ahead of Carl Wilhelm Sheele (1742-1786) and Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), opening the way to experimentally obtain the oxygen, but also explored its benefits , then found a practical application of his discovery.

However, the ungrateful humanity, or rather that part of it, which is called «historians of science and technology», in three-plus centuries forgot about Cornelius Van Drebbel, remembering only the negative and distorting the facts, neglecting biographies unobjectively appreciating his work. But, except the creation of a submarine and open ways to get oxygen through thermal decomposition of nitrate, he was one of the inventors of the thermometer, and the sophisticated microscope. In addition, he created the first oven with an automatic temperature control; proposed a method of dyeing in scarlet ... in our virtual calendar we present a biography of this distinguished inventor, noting the date of November 7, 1633, when Cornelius van Drebbel, forgotten by all, died in absolute poverty in London's Franciscan monastery.

But the memory of Cornelius van Drebbel gradually returned to the descendants. This is clearly shown in the attribution of a lunar crater named Drebbel.

<http://www.drebbel.net/Uit%20het%20russisch.htm>

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[And here comes the really vital question from the rather sceptical Philadelph.]

*Phil.* Can you yield me any reason to persuade me concerning the possibility of **perpetuity** of this motion?

*Theo.* You have heard before that fire is the most active and powerfull Element, and the cause of all motion in nature. This was well known to Cornelius, by his practise in the untwining of the elements, <sup>1</sup> and therefore to the effecting of this greate worke, he extracted a fierie spirit, out of the minerall matter, joininge the same with his proper aire, which enclued in the Axeltree, being hollow, carrieth the wheelles, making a continual rotation or revolution, except issue or bent be given to the Axeltree, whereby that imprisoned spirit may get forth. I am bold thus to conjecture, because I did at sundry times pry into the practice of this gentleman, with whom I was very familiar. Moreover, when as the King our Sovereigne could hardly believe that this motion be perpetuall, except the mysteries were revealed unto him: this cunning Bezaleel, in secret manner disclosed to his Majestie the secret, whereupon he applauded the rare invention. The fame hereof

<sup>1</sup> A reference, of course, to Drebbel's treatise *Van de Natuyre der Elementen*.



There is a very distinct analogy here with Drebbel's device although, of course, there is no mention in the case of Archimedes to the movements of the tides. And in this connection we might refer to a letter which de Peiresc wrote to the painter **Rubens** on 29 June 1623 in which he suggested that the latter should not forget, when passing through Brussels to see Drebbel's instrument showing the ebb and flow of the sea.<sup>1</sup> Here there is no mention of any almanack data, but if, as we know, **Drebbel** had first constructed a *perpetuum mobile* in or before 1607, this letter shows that at least one of these machines was working some 16 years later. And it is certain that such a distinguished philosopher as Constantijn Huygens, and the mathematician Marin Mersenne (1588-1648) were quite content to accept the principle of Drebbel's machine and most of the claims which he made for it. There is, indeed, plenty of contemporary evidence that the *perpetuum mobile* did fulfil some function, although it would be difficult to say exactly what that function was. But of all this evidence the last which we shall quote is that of John Wilkins, who was Bishop of Chester, a man whose head, according to current opinion, 'ran much upon perpetual motion', and who in 1662 became the first secretary of the Royal Society. One of the most important books which he wrote was his "Mathematical Magick, or the Wonders which may be performed by Mechanical Geometry" published in 1648, some fifteen years after **Drebbel** had died.

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1961 The Two Netherlanders: Humphrey Bradley and Cornelis Drebbel

<http://books.google.nl/books?id=TckUAAAIAAJ&pg=PA157&lpg=PA157&dq=drebbel+rubens+magik&source=bl&ots=uGU7P3S9FJ&sig=5-bLgQhbfRiSJ5adIZ0modWUCQ&hl=en&sa=X&ei=lavaUd73O8TCswb4IYAI&ved=0CEQQ6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=drebbel%20rubens%20magik&f=false>

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