Nymph. Motif, Phantom, Affect
A Contribution to the Study of Aby Warburg (1866-1929)
by B. Baert

DESCRIPTION:
"Behind them, close to the open door, there runs - no, that is not the word, there flies, or rather there hovers - the object of my dreams, which slowly assumes the proportion of a harming nightmare. A fantastic figure - should I call her a servant girl, or rather a classical nymph? (...) This lively, light-footed and rapid gait, this striding step, which contrasts with the aloof distance of all other figures, what is the meaning of it all? (...) My condition varied between a bad dream and a fairy tale (...). I lost my reason. It was always she who brought life and movement into an otherwise calm scene. Indeed, she appeared to be the embodiment of movement (...) but is it very unpleasant to be her lover? (...) Who is she? Where does she come from? Have I encountered her before? I mean one and a half millennia earlier? Does she come from a noble Greek lineage, and did her great-grandmother have an affair with people from Asia Minor, Egypt or Mesopotamia?" — Aby Warburg (1866-1929)