



markedly altered the appearance of the room. The whole space became brighter and no longer was it necessary for a family to cluster around a candle. Gas was in domestic use in London around 1815, a gas light company having been established three years earlier. The light came from a controlled flame until the introduction of the incandescent gas mantle in about 1887 when a reasonably strong light became possible. Even if, despite the ubiquity and flexibility of electric light, we still place candles on the dinner party table, it requires a serious leap of the imagination to visualise the alternating gloom and glare of a single candle in an Italian palazzo or a Georgian house.

Candles change the appearance of colour. Their placement on the table flatters the complexion because of the light's emphasis on the red end of the spectrum. Gas light was, on the other hand, condemned as it tended to make people look greenish. Under whatever light, colour is something we associate with interiors. Mostly it is applied colour. We do not make the same instant connection between applied colour and the exterior; today polychromy is a startling exception, yet it was not always so. We have for so long been accustomed to looking at Greek temples or Gothic cathedrals as pure stone structures and have admired them for exactly that unified quality of material, that we deeply resist the suggestion that they might have been coloured; that they might have been more like a contemporary south Indian temple – to make an extreme suggestion – than the white limestone forms we imagine from the ruined remains of antiquity.

That colour was used on parts of Greek temples is not in real dispute. Traces of colour have been found and are recorded particularly in the first half of the 19th century. For instance blue, red and yellow paint was found on the cornice of the Parthenon (Dodwell, 1819). These fuelled the Polychrome Controversy in which the architect-archaeologist Jacques-Ignace Hittorf and Gottfried Semper, architect and historian, were the most active in making claims for polychromy, perhaps even for a consistent colour system. They had some written support from Vitruvius (1983) who stated in Book 4 Chapter II that tryglyphs were painted with blue wax. This seems, however, to refer to the timber prototypes which are being discussed in that chapter.

Semper believed that in Greek temples:

'The white marble never remained naked, not even the parts intended to appear white; but the layer of colour by which they were covered was rendered more or less transparent, to enable the white colour of the marble to appear through it. In the same manner, coloured or