> polished marbles, granite, ivory, gold and other metallic portions of the edifice, were all protected by a coating of transparent colour. Further proof is afforded by Egyptian monuments in granite, and by many passages in ancient authors referring to this practice.'
> (Semper, 1851, p.243)

As a result his vision was utterly different from ours but probably equally romantic and probably equally questionable.

> 'The prevailing colour of the temple burned with all the glowing beauty of the setting sun. The colour may be defined as of a yellow red, very vapoury, resembling that of the finest terra cottas. In fact the general appearance of the temple would precisely resemble the appearance of a fine day in an eastern climate.'
> (Semper, 1851, p.245)

Semper's enthusiasm was triggered by both a desire to spread his views, which included the belief that walls had their origin in coloured woven hangings, as well as to foster a 'revival' of polychromy. Very similarly our enthusiasm for white Attic temples is, no doubt, influenced by a sympathy for 20th century white architecture.

In England, polychromy was strongly championed in the 19th century by Owen Jones in three publications: *Plans, Elevations, Sections & Details of the Alhambra* (1842 – 46), *The Polychromatic Ornament of Italy* (1846) and the *Grammar of Ornament* (1856). It was, of course, much easier to accept that an unfamiliar Islamic palace in southern Spain should display colour than that it should occur on the Parthenon, quite apart from the fact that the evidence – that of durable tiles – was still much more visible. What was uncertain in the 19th century and continues to be uncertain today is the extent of the use of colour in classical temples: were only certain elements picked out or was the whole building

colour washed? Even small areas of colour, however, would hardly conform to our accepted view of what characterises a Greek temple.

As we come closer to our own time, our appreciation does not necessarily become more accurate. We are completely conditioned to colour in the interior of Gothic cathedrals: painted ceilings, bosses, occasional wall paintings and of course the brilliant colour of stained glass. We tend in fact to be surprised when there is an absence of stained glass and white light enters the space. The outside is, however, another matter. We expect to see stone, or sometimes brick as at Albi, so that the west façade of Orvieto Cathedral of about 1310 – 30 seems a curiosity. Its horizontal stripes of different coloured stone combine with coloured marbles and mosaic to produce a vivid polychromy that almost comes as a shock.

Someone imbued with northern Gothic may dismiss Orvieto on geographic grounds since it resembles, to paraphrase Semper, 'the appearance of a fine day in a southern climate'. It would be dangerous to do so and ignore surviving evidence which is admittedly scarce. Paint has been eroded and chemically broken down by pollution, particularly since the 19th century. The analysis of paint fragments taken from the west front of Exeter Cathedral, for instance, indicates that large areas were coloured – mainly green, red and orange (Sinclair, 1991, pp.116 – 33). It is quite likely that Exeter was not an isolated instance.

During the lengthy restoration of the West Front of Wells Cathedral fragments of paint were again discovered surviving in crevices of the stonework.

The examples – the urban farmyard, the characteristics of artificial light and the use of colour – have been chosen to suggest that our vision of the past may be faulty or, at the very least, likely to be highly partial. The present, as well as our current imagining of the past, is no safe clue to a correct, that is