sign the Ripper to the unsolved files.

Backing up the rediscovered information with a bit of contemporary forensics didn't, in truth, take too long. It certainly didn't take the space that the channel gave the programme, which is why the evidence of expert forensic pathologists was interspersed with the likes of the man in upstate New York who owns the bar where Tumulty might once have peddled Victorian pornography, talking about the nature of the Victorian porn trade with all the expertise you'd expect of a bar owner in upstate New York.

The rest of the padding, though, was rather more substantial. Unlike the traditional we-know-who-the-Ripper-was documentaries that appear each decade, this had a proper feeling for the historical context. We learnt that such was the split between rich and poor in Victorian London that one in seven women was, according to the *Lancet*, willing to sell her body. We learnt that the reason these quotidian murders stayed in the public consciousness while other murderous episodes in those murderous times had been forgotten was that the Ripper coincided with a massive expansion of the tabloid press. Indeed, the most interesting discovery of all was that the term Jack the Ripper was coined by a pair of journalists who, to keep the tabloid momentum going, sent a hoax confession to the police in that name.

And finally, an apology. Last week, I said that *Carnal Knowledge* and *Oh, Mr Beeching!* were the worst shows on British TV. I had not then seen *Takeover TV* (Channel 4, Friday, 11.05pm), a home video show apparently sponsored by the television camera operators' union to demonstrate how unbroadcastable is anything taped by amateurs.

SUSAN JEFFREYS
RADIO

Is Jimmy on the Boyle?

A bunch of griping exiles, calling from different parts of France, wanted to know if James Boyle would get rid of cricket on Radio 4 long-wave. They live in hope, out there in Bordeaux or wherever.

James Boyle, the former head of BBC Radio in Scotland, now Radio 4 supremo, was in at the crease on the *Today* programme. Naughtie and MacGregor were being nice to him, in that way you are with a new boss, and Boyle was being nice to the listeners. He explained to the people in France, as they cut into their breakfast *brioche*, that there was a problem with frequencies. He said there were fewer and fewer frequencies (if he had said less and less, several hundred listeners would have started digging into the Basildon Bond with their fountain pens), but that the research on the subject was pretty old. It was done in 1994, which seems recent enough to me, but new bosses love to get research under way.

Jocelyn Haye, who represents The Voice of the Listener, asked, in a very roundabout way, if Boyle was going to chase after listeners by going downmarket. Another listener, and you sensed an old grudge here, wondered if he would take off new programmes before they'd had a decent chance – as he had in Scotland. Then there was the usual question about why there isn't more for children on Radio 4.

Boyle played them all with a straight bat (look, I'm only keeping this sustained metaphor going because this is about Radio 4, home of the sustained metaphor: "As the snows of winter recede, will the fragile shoots of democracy be seen again?"). But he gave the children's radio enquirer a bit of a whack.

I don't know what it is about some adults and children's radio. They come over all misty-eyed with nostalgia about *Toy Town*. Could they not find Radio Luxembourg? Good Lord, even Garner Ted Armstrong, Radio Luxembourg's Voice of God, was preferable to listening to the awful bleatings of Larry the Lamb.

Boyle pointed out that children liked to listen to Radio 1. He's absolutely right. *We* might like to think of them all lying on their stomachs in front of the fire, waving their grey-socked shins around while listening to Uncle Jim describing the eruption of Vesuvius, but it's not going to happen. We are doomed to retune the radio each time they've been at it.

As a cross section of listeners it was mighty unrepresentative. As a cross section of the sort of people who write in to complain about Radio 4 it was pretty accurate. Boyle didn't mention that the cricket haters in France don't pay licence money and that hardly any listeners have ever heard of their so-called Voice. He stayed polite in that awful way you have to when you are a public servant.

I can sort out the cricket problem for him easily. The minute any disgruntled member of the commentary team starts a sentence "In my day . . ." he should be sacked on the spot. The same goes for "It's a sideways-on game" and "It's a matter of line and length." The empty places should be filled by those with a feel for the English language and an ability to describe a scene. Then it would be a joy to listen to, as it was before Johnners reduced it to an old boys' club.

Given the chance, I'd have nothing about food or travel and I'd only let *Does He Take Sugar?* continue if it was fronted by Ian Dury. I'd lock up *Money Box* for ever, and I'd have Peggy Archer taken out and shot. I would not allow any feature to start with the words "For those of you thinking of . . ."; I wouldn't let *Woman's Hour* get away with those "She's an . . ." introductions, as in "She's a trained violinist. She's a Cherokee Indian. She's a qualified pilot and she's in the studio now."

Another thing, Jimmy: I'd have "Sailing By", full version, every night at close-down, I wouldn't let the list of writers be in excess of the number of jokes on *Week Ending*, I'd forbid anyone to recommend planting shrubs on *Gardeners' Question Time*, I'd insist on some Cornish accents reading the news and I have a list of people I'd want sacked immediately because they have slighted me in the past.

In short, you should pay as much attention to me as to all those people right now putting green ink to lined paper and get on with the job. Best of luck.

MARGARET WALTERS
OPERA

Lulu and the lovers

The ringmaster prances on stage at Glyndebourne to declare Alban Berg's opera – his "circus" – open. He leers at the audience, flashing an accusing mirror at us. The set behind him, a semi-circle of soft, red brick and bare wood reflects the shape and the texture of the auditorium. The invitation to discover ourselves on stage may be obvious; but it underlines *Lulu*'s curious modernity.

Born in the 1890s, in Frank Wedekind's plays *Earth Spirit* and *Pandora's Box*, Lulu still seems uncomfortably contemporary, beyond category. She's not quite Salome the man-eating monster, and she's certainly not a masochist redeemed by suffering, like Violetta in *La Traviata*. Is she vamp or victim?

Wedekind – whom Berg followed closely – wanted Lulu played like a Madonna. Louise Brooks, helmet of black hair framing her luminous face, made her mysterious: in G W Pabst's 1928 film she is a child-woman, narcissistic and amoral, an elusive icon who (like cinema itself) provokes, feeds and inevitably disappoints our fantasies. I've seen actresses play Lulu as a predatory

tease, whose very death-cries express orgasmic pleasure; others for whom she's a waif, still the abused child she once was. The politically correct version sees Lulu as the creature of men's desire, made and destroyed by their needs. Labelling Lulu, we inadvertently label ourselves.

In Graham Vick's production at Glyndebourne, Christine Schäfer avoids all the clichés. Her Lulu is compelling because she's passive, a focus for the other characters' tangled desires. She poses for her portrait at the start, apple on one outstretched hand, a very modern Eve in snakeskin trousers and T-shirt who artlessly enjoys being admired. Her husbands see her as destructive: she serves as a catalyst for their self-destructiveness. The first, an elderly doctor, drops dead in a jealous rage, the painter cuts his throat when he discovers her past, and Lulu shoots the newspaper magnate Dr Schön in self-defence.

Critics sometimes seize, sentimentally, on Lulu's remark that Schön is the only man she ever loved. But she spells out only too clearly the basis of their "love". Schön has plucked the 11-year-old Lulu off the streets, fed her, clothed her, and married her off to men chosen because they did not interfere with his pleasure. That "love" doesn't stop her from flirting with his composer son, Alwa, and with assorted caricatures – an old pimp, an athlete, a schoolboy and the lesbian Countess who smoulders hopelessly whenever Lulu smiles.

Schäfer's cool, bright voice gives Lulu an honesty that the others (even Alwa, who is writing an opera – this opera? – about her) totally lack. She brings great emotional power to those tantalisingly brief moments when Lulu seems to reveal herself: the repeated "I don't know" that blocks Alwa's attempts to pin her down on love and faith; the great soaring cry of freedom that dignifies her escape from prison. On the run, with greedy hangers-on trying to cash in on her sexuality, Lulu still insists on her own moral code: "I know at a hundred paces if a man is right for me and if I go against this knowledge I feel besmirched."

Her admirers spin around Lulu in a grotesque dance, exaggerated by the concentric revolves on the Glyndbourne stage. Lulu, brittle and exhausted in a cheap mini-skirt, is set up to meet her fate – which is, of course, Jack the Ripper.

In 1898, Wedekind played the role of Dr Schön in *Earth Spirit*; in the 1905 performance of *Pandora's Box* – attended by the 20-year-old Alban Berg – he was Jack himself. Twenty years later Berg made this difficult identification central to his opera: Lulu's three husbands turn up as clients in the London brothel, with Schön doubling as Jack. You could read it as a blackly realistic joke – respective husbands do frequent brothels. But Berg's device crystallises the cruel contradictions at the heart of the story.

The satirist Karl Kraus, who produced that 1905 performance, described Jack as "the quintessential avenger of the male sex", but he also concluded that: "this sex murder is accomplished like a destiny whose origins lie in the furthest depths of the female nature." Louise Brooks insisted that Pabst – who had her play the final encounter with Jack as a tender love scene – was exploring his sexual *hatred*. Yet she acknowledged that her own life mirrored Lulu's, that she receives "the gift that has been her dream: death by a sexual maniac".

The close of the opera is profoundly affecting because you *hear* rather than see Lulu's brutal murder. Yet it's curiously easy to romanticise, to gloss over the sadistic savagery of her death: some see it as a straightforward sacrifice to misogyny; others seize on her plea – "I love you so much. Don't make me beg" – to suggest that she and Jack *did* love each other. But perhaps she dies because she is, finally, desperate and for the first time reveals her own loneliness and fear.

The portrait of Schäfer's cheerful, young Lulu hangs on the wall, an ironic measure of her fall, and a reminder that her image has always mattered to the other characters – and now to the other characters – more than she does. We're left to make of that image what we will.

"Lulu" is in repertory at Glyndebourne until August 15. The production is screened on Channel 4 on July 27 at 6.25pm

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PHIL BAKER
OTTOMAN ART

Sultans of cool in the summer heat

Ottoman Turkey has not had a good image in the west. Tsar Alexander's crack about the "Sick Man of Europe" has stuck remarkably well, and I remember a board game called *Diplomacy*, which had a little Orientalist cartoon of a seedy lounging Turk – obviously the Sick Man in person – smoking a hookah while jabbing a hypodermic in his backside.

Empire of the Sultans, the understated and gracious exhibition at the new Brunei Gallery in London, is a challenge to the west, an unapologetic presentation of Ottoman culture in its own terms. When we think of Ottoman art we think of carpets, velvets and Iznik ceramics (the blue and white stuff with the red sealing wax), but this exhibition honours the primacy of the *word* in Islam, where calligraphy is the highest form of art.

The subtext is about writing and power. Even more than most societies, the Ottomans – who ruled for 600 years until the 1920s – were obsessed with written authority: the Koran (the direct transmission of the word of God), the "chain of calligraphers" down the centuries, the Sultan's *tughra* (elaborate and highly stylised signatures, with deliberately minimal evolution from Sultan to Sultan), and all the elaborate scripted paraphernalia of a calligraphic bureaucracy.

Calligraphy was a moral and spiritual art rather than a decorative one, and calligraphers were akin to holy men or intellectuals. The great Ottoman calligrapher Shaykh Hamdullah was so revered that the Sultan would hold his inkpot while he wrote. Examples of Hamdullah's work in this exhibition have a plain, almost ascetic presence, and it is strange to think of them as roughly contemporary with the work of Raphael. They are the highest product of a civilisation developing in an entirely different direction.

'God is Alone', 19th century

Some of the most beautiful calligraphy is to be found in the illuminated Korans, including a fine example copied for Mercan Agha, Chief of the White Eunuchs. Its sinuous fascination for the western eye has a great deal to do with its opacity; exoticism as incomprehensibility, in Baudrillard's phrase. Translated, Islamic calligraphy can be disappointing, but as Chesterton said of billboards: "You might think you were in heaven if you were unable to read."

Among the manuscripts are some stun-