***Macbeth***

***Notes on Act 4, scenes 1 and 2***

Scene 1:

* In **lines 1-37,** details of the witches brew is given. It is meant to sound strange and repulsive; this helps to create a supernatural atmosphere and reinforces a mood of evil. See page 168 for a detailed explanation of the ingredients.
* “...something wicked... comes” (44). If the witches call Macbeth wicked, he must be really bad.
* Macbeth shows his evil, selfish and ambitious nature in **lines 50-61.** He again says that he would rather have all the world thrown into chaos than be denied answers to his questions.
* Macbeth’s answers take a supernatural form. He is confronted by a series of apparitions. ***First,*** the severed head. It represents his future at the hands of Macduff. ***The second*** is a bloody child, representing Macduff, who says “...none of women born/Shall harm Macbeth”(86). We will soon learn that Macduff was not born in a natural way: he was delivered by C-section. So technically, his mother did not “bear” him. Macbeth doesn’t consider this. He seems happy, because he assumes that everyone is “borne of woman.” So therefore, he need not fear anyone. ***The third*** is a crowned child holding a tree. This represents Malcolm, who is the rightful King. The tree he holds and the mention of a forest called Birnam Wood also foreshadows what is coming. Macbeth is again pleased. The child says that Macbeth will be King until “Great Birnam Wood” attacks him at Dunsinane. How can a forest possibly move (103-105), Macbeth thinks. But we will later see how Malcolm and his army use the branches and trees of Birnam Wood as camouflage when attacking Macbeth at Dunsinane. ***All of this serves to make Macbeth over-confident,*** which is how the witches and Hecate planned it. Over-confidence will lead to his downfall.
* When the witches refuse to answer his questions regarding Banquo’s descendants, Macbeth gets angry (114-116). The witches then show him a series of eight spirit Kings, all resembling Banquo, and finally, a smiling image of Banquo himself.
* **Irony:** “... damned all those that trust them”(152), when referring to the witches. He certainly seemed to trust them. He concludes the scene by saying that he has been too slow to act on things, and that from now on, he will act first and think later.

Scene 2:

* Macduff’s wife is angry at his leaving. Ross tries to convince her that it is for the best, but she is quite upset. She feels abandoned.
* Lady Macduff, in talking to her son, says that her husband is dead (34) - hypothetical question. She wants to know how her son would react to it.
* She calls her husband a traitor (54). Obviously is quite angry. She may mean that she considers him a traitor to his family. However, notice how quickly she defends him when the murderers enter (90-91).
* After the messenger’s surprising and upsetting visit, Lady Macduff wonders why she should be in danger, since she “...have done no harm” (83). But, in commenting on the confusing times in which she lives, when doing evil is praised and doing good is punished, she states the play’s **reversal** theme and recognizes that she may well be in danger.
* The fact that Macbeth has caused the murder of innocent women and children shows that he has sunken to new lows. He is truly depraved now, and purely evil.