The scene from Hamlet is equally fine (though it is not the famous soliloquy, which he feels we have heard quite enough). We see the Prince, brooding, growing uneasy into his mantle of royalty, rather as he might once have been played by a young Jacobi. In the same scene, he transforms into a doddering Polonius, growing the players with frank disapproval and resigned disinterest, and then again into the first player, whose evident theatricality does not inhibit his performance. McKellen turns the same trick in another scene, playing both Falstaff and Prince Hal, in a scene in which each of these plays Hall’s father, the king. As the rotund Falstaff, McKellen suddenly seems to fall out his over-sized suit implausibly, a commanding figure by dint of his rotund weight and very real, grumbling bear of a voice.

He also plays Romeo and Juliet (executing Romeo one of the more plausible deaths I have ever seen), and popping in and out of character in the blink of an eye. He pops not only from Hal to Falstaff and back, but also into and out of his own character. At one point, selling the story of his arrival at Cambridge, he injects an entire speech (“Once more unto the breach…”) into the middle of a sentence, then jumps back into the same sentence.

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And it seems astonishing that one person in baggy trousers can do all this, in-stent, amuse and entertain and all at once, he also continually puts it all in perspective for us, giving his views on the nature of acting and of actors. "Shakespeare wants to convey to you the utter meaninglessness of life," he finally explains about Macbeth, "so he compares it to the theater.

Dirty Needles...

* * *

If you won't read these 7 signals of cancer... You probably have the 8th.

1. Change in bowel or bladder habits.
2. A sore that does not heal.
3. Unusual bleeding or discharge.
4. Thinning or lump in breast or elsewhere.
5. Indigestion or difficulty in swallowing.
6. Obvious change in a wart or mole.
7. Nagging cough or hoarseness.
8. A fear of cancer that can prevent you from detecting cancer at an early stage. A stage when it is highly curable.

Everyone's afraid of cancer, but don't let it scare you to death.

American Cancer Society

Dirty Needles...