

Makeovers. The very word is a connotation of a life changing moment, after which can only be a future where you walk in slow motion, accompanied by an inspirational, happy, rock tune for a soundtrack. And lots of spiral staircases because how else will a room full of people crane their necks for a good look? Growing up, a makeover was all I had ever wanted, a desire fueled to a passion after having watched movies like "Clueless" or "Princess Diaries." Thus defined the standards for what is considered feminine and desirable. Even more disturbing is the image portrayed before the transformation; the geeky girl whose social awkwardness comes from her appearance and shyness is a flat, invisible character. Just as how femininity is drawn within rigid lines, the girl in her unfeminine state is formless, yet confined within the single representation used over and over again in film.

Which is why I could not help but rejoice when "Stranger Things" brought Eleven. However my joy was only short-lived until Eleven received her transformation in order to blend in seamlessly. What irked me further was that it had been at the hands of Mike, a boy with whom she sought refuge. Although these were innocent children, it subtly portrays the binary perception of gender instilled within us from childhood. To Mike, "pretty" is recognised within a certain form, which Eleven was able to fulfill after donning the hair, dress and makeup. Eleven's initial appearance had been met with much ambiguity, alluding to her mysterious origins. Before the transformation her encounters with people had been met with confusion and fear as they could not put a finger on how to define her. However the 'pre-feminised' Eleven was also a being that could only exist in hiding; the basement, the hidden room in the lab, the forest through which she was able to roam free with her friends. She existed in secrecy, hidden away by her father-figure, and her friends.

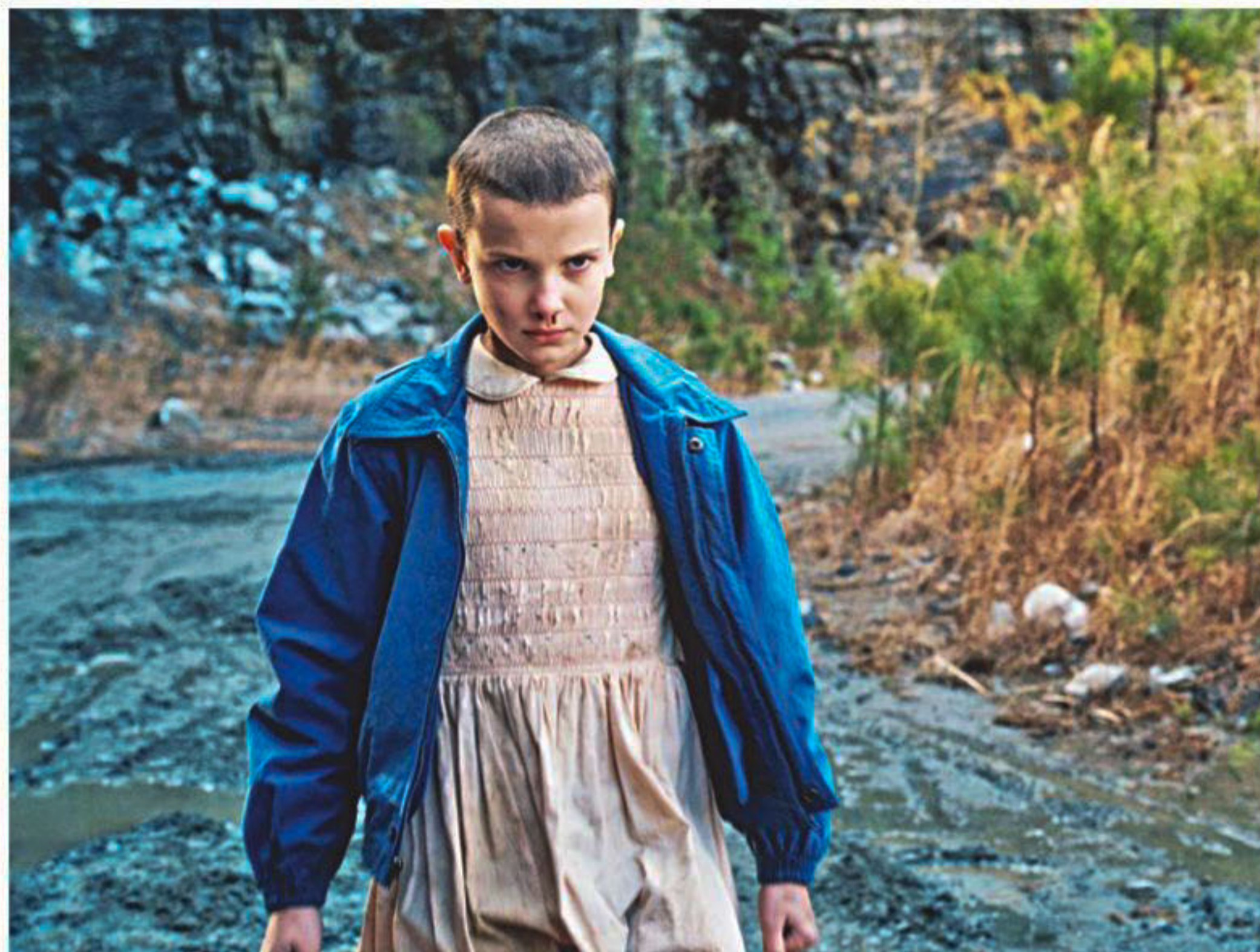
Although the series paid homage to the 1980's in film, and Eleven's nature of origin had been the primary motivation for the discretionary efforts made towards her confinement away from the world, her invisible status echoes the geeks of romantic comedies and other films. It also reflects our cultural understandings of



## THE GIRL IN THE MIRROR

ROBINA RASHID BHUIYAN

PHOTOS: INTERNET



compulsory hetero-normativity where social standards of beauty and feminine identity is the only accepted form of woman, and anything different must be 'changed' or 'cured.' For a long time in history, these 'misfits' have been represented within literary texts as the madwoman, or the hysterical woman, who must be confined within a room, or more famously in Charlotte Bronte's "Jane Eyre," the attic and the fearsome Red Room, so that the world is safe from her histrionics. Before television, books had been the medium of the feminine portrayal of women, who serve as the angels of the house, only to be replaced now by the sweet, beautiful heroines whose transformation is imperative in order for her male lover to take an interest. The male gaze in these films is also the audience's gaze, as we recognise what we see now is beautiful, and accepted.

Although there was no spiral staircase for Eleven to descend from, there was a mirror through which she meets her new self. Jacques Lacan's theory of the mirror stage describes a phase where the infant learns to recognise his or her image in the mirror, and learns that the image projected within the reflection is not merely the 'self,' but also the subjective self the world sees. This creates a duality between the ego and the body, as well as the Imaginary and The Real. For the women in makeover scenes, the mirror image also brings about another development; the recognition of the self as a sexual being, a being that must be feminine in order to appear desirable and to act upon one's own desires.

Eleven later ditches her blonde wig upon discovering it does little to deter her powers, and she roams free creating chaos in her wake. Although Mike's affections for her were still retained, it cannot be ignored that his feelings came into awareness once the transformation had been made. Even without the wig, the viewers cannot shake off the potential Eleven had to be 'pretty,' and that had been enough to forgive her appearance later on. Although "Stranger Things" did a magnificent job in bringing body politics into attention, we must realise the only way women can reverse this, in Virginia Woolf's words, would be to "kill the aesthetic ideal through which they themselves have been 'killed' into art."

GENDER

QUIRKY SCIENCE



Scientists have identified for the first time the region in the brain responsible for the "placebo effect" in pain relief, when a fake treatment actually results in substantial reduction of pain, according to new research from Northwestern Medicine and the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago (RIC).

Pinpointing the sweet spot of the pain killing placebo effect could result in the design of more personalized medicine for the 100 million Americans with chronic pain. The fMRI technology developed for the study has the potential to usher in an era of individualized pain therapy by enabling targeted pain medication based on how an individual's brain responds to a drug.

The finding also will lead to more precise and accurate clinical trials for pain

medications by eliminating individuals with high placebo response before trials.

The scientists discovered a unique brain region within the mid frontal gyrus that identifies placebo pill responders in one trial and can be validated (95 percent correct) in the placebo group of a second trial.

The study was published Oct. 27, 2016, in PLOS Biology.

"Given the enormous societal toll of chronic pain, being able to predict placebo responders in a chronic pain population could both help the design of personalized medicine and enhance the success of clinical trials," said Marwan Baliki, research scientist at RIC and an assistant professor of physical medicine and rehabilitation at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine.

A new kind of bioluminescent sensor causes individual brain cells to imitate fireflies and glow in the dark.

The probe, which was developed by a team of Vanderbilt scientists, is a genetically modified form of luciferase, the enzyme that a number of other species including fireflies use to produce light. It is described in a paper published in the journal Nature Communications on Oct. 27.

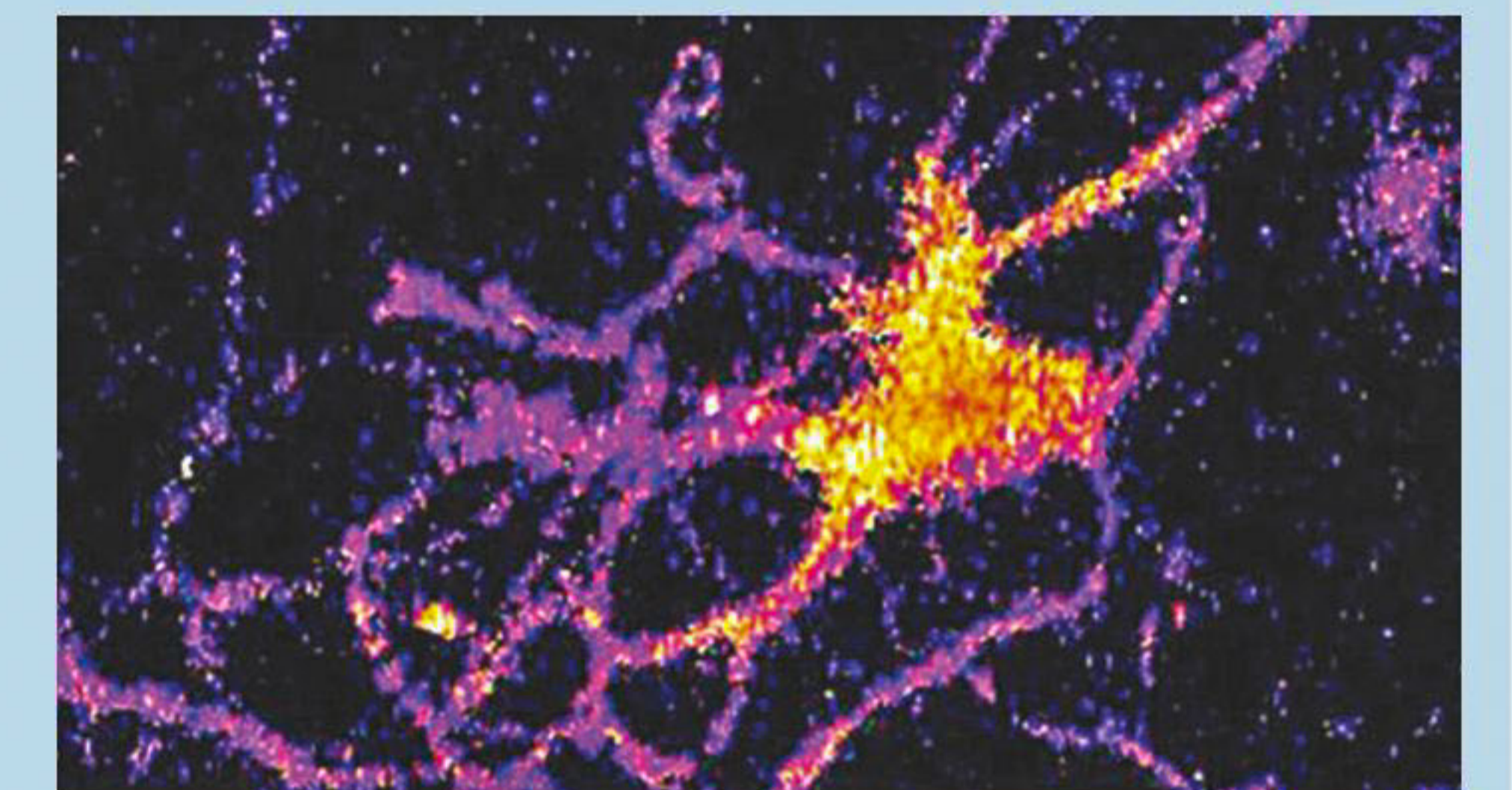
The scientists created the technique as a new and improved method for tracking the interactions within large neural networks in the brain.

"For a long time neuroscientists relied on electrical techniques for recording the activity of neurons. These are very good at monitoring individual neurons but are limited to small numbers of neurons. The new wave is to use optical techniques to

record the activity of hundreds of neurons at the same time," said Carl Johnson, Stevenson Professor of Biological Sciences, who headed the effort.

"Most of the efforts in optical recording use fluorescence, but this requires a strong external light source which can cause the tissue to heat up and can interfere with some biological processes, particularly those that are light sensitive," he said.

## BRAIN CELLS TO GLOW IN THE DARK



Source: Sciencedaily.com

STRANGE HISTORY

## CASTRO VERSUS DEATH

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN



If we make a list of some of the most charismatic political leaders of modern history, indubitably Fidel Castro will top many global leaders. From 1959 to 2008, he ruled Cuba with an iron fist, defying threats from the strongest superpower of the world at his doorstep. For his revolutionary image and uncompromising attitude to his rivals and to the whims of the superpowers, he was their intelligence agencies' most sought after target. Former Cuban Intelligence chief has claimed that more than 600 attempts have been made to kill or destabilise this dictator. Political rivals, conspirators, foreign intelligence agencies used local gangsters, drug dealers and rebels to assassinate Castro to take control over Cuba, a country which was considered strategically a very important spot throughout the Cold War. Poisonous chemical Thallium was found several times in his food which could kill him slowly. LSD was injected in his drinking water to make him talk like a mad man during radio broadcast. Bombs were placed in some of the most unconceivable places to kill this communist leader. Exploding traffic lights in Havana's streets, tide-line of exploding sea-shells when Castro went to visit a sea beach, exploding cigars, roadside bombs have made Castro headlines in the newspapers worldwide countless times. However, every time he came out alive, the failed assassination attempts gave him the opportunity to tighten his fist against any political opposition. Still this leader is alive and now at the age of 90, he advises his brother Raul Castro to rule Cuba following his footsteps. Often he says, "If surviving assassination attempts were an Olympic event, I would win the gold medal."

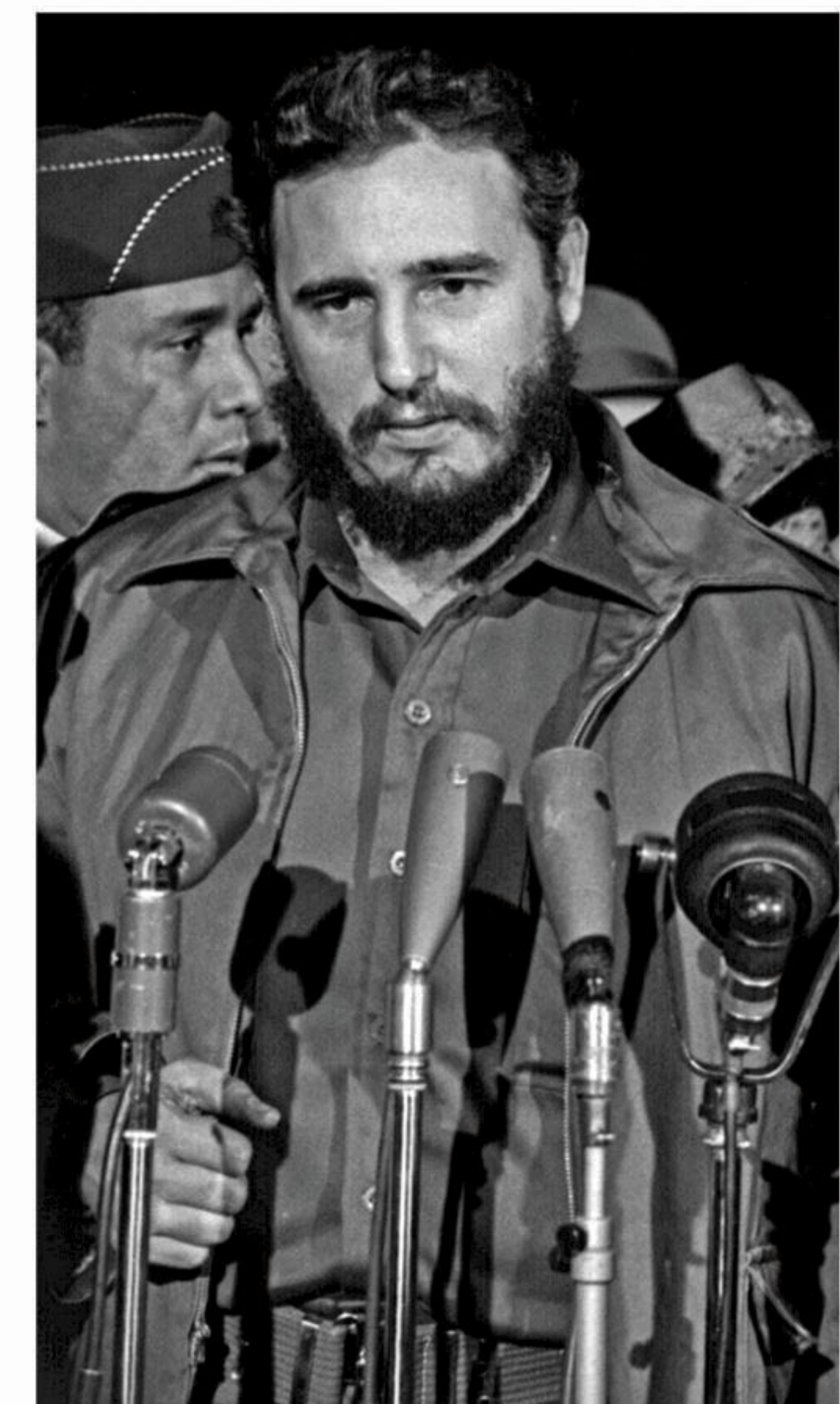


PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## 9.83 NUMBERS

Is the percentage of the admission seekers passed the entry tests to Dhaka University's 'Gha' unit under social sciences faculty. The university's Vice Chancellor AAMS Arefin Siddique announced the result at the central admission office of DU administration building around 12:00pm. The test was held on Friday at 99 centres inside and outside of the DU campus, where 86,989 aspirants competed against 1,540 available seats. In the result, 7,556 admission seekers passed. As the number of seats is limited, standard question paper was prepared for the test, VC Arefin Siddique told journalists.