THE SPECTACULAR RADIO-NEAR-IR-X-RAY JET OF 3C 111: THE X-RAY EMISSION MECHANISM AND JET KINEMATICS

DEVON CLAUCICE1, ERIC S. PERLMAN1, MARKOS GEORGANOPoulos2, MATTHEW L. LISTER3, FRANCESCO TOMBESI4,5, MIHAI CARA6, HERMAN L. MARSHALL7, BRANDON HOGAN3, AND DEMOS KAZANAS5

1 Department of Physics and Space Sciences, Florida Institute of Technology, 150 W. University Boulevard, Melbourne, FL 32901, USA
2 Department of Physics, University of Maryland—Baltimore County, 1000 Hilltop Circle, Baltimore, MD 21250, USA
3 Department of Physics and Astronomy, Purdue University, 525 Northwestern Avenue, West Lafayette, IN 47907, USA
4 Department of Astronomy, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742-2421, USA
5 NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center, Astrophysics Science Division, Code 663, Greenbelt, MD 20771, USA
6 Space Telescope Science Institute, 3700 San Martin Drive, Baltimore, MD 21218, USA
7 Kavli Institute for Astrophysics and Space Research, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA 02139, USA

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ABSTRACT

Relativistic jets are the most energetic manifestation of the active galactic nucleus (AGN) phenomenon. AGN jets are observed from the radio through gamma-rays and carry copious amounts of matter and energy from the sub-parsec central regions out to the kiloparsec and often megaparsec scale galaxy and cluster environs. While most spatially resolved jets are seen in the radio, an increasing number have been discovered to emit in the optical/near-IR and/or X-ray bands. Here we discuss a spectacular example of this class, the 3C 111 jet, housed in one of the nearest, double-lobed FR II radio galaxies known. We discuss new, deep Chandra and Hubble Space Telescope (HST) observations that reveal both near-IR and X-ray emission from several components of the 3C 111 jet, as well as both the northern and southern hotspots. Important differences are seen between the morphologies in the radio, X-ray, and near-IR bands. The long (over 100 kpc on each side), straight nature of this jet makes it an excellent prototype for future, deep observations, as it is one of the longest such features seen in the radio, near-IR/optical, and X-ray bands. Several independent lines of evidence, including the X-ray and broadband spectral shape as well as the implied velocity of the approaching hotspot, lead us to strongly disfavor the EC/CMB model and instead favor a two-component synchrotron model to explain the observed X-ray emission for several jet components. Future observations with NuSTAR, HST, and Chandra will allow us to further constrain the emission mechanisms.

Key words: galaxies: active – galaxies: jets – radio continuum: galaxies – X-rays: galaxies

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the milestone discoveries of Chandra was the X-ray emission from nearly 100 quasar and radio galaxy jets, as well as their hotspots. The latter are high brightness regions where the jets collide with the intergalactic medium. In the radio and optical, the emission from these sites is synchrotron in nature. This guarantees the presence of X-ray emission, via the optical, the emission from these sites is synchrotron in nature. The discrepancy between the observed X-ray fluxes and the predictions of SSC models is often glaring (e.g., Schwartz et al. 2000; Wilson et al. 2001; Sambruna et al. 2004; Marshall et al. 2005), with the X-rays commonly being orders of magnitude brighter than the SSC prediction if equipartition magnetic fields are assumed. Tavecchio et al. (2000) and Celotti et al. (2001) proposed to explain this excess X-ray emission as external Compton (EC) scattering of cosmic microwave background (CMB) photons by the jet’s relativistic electrons. This requires jets with bulk Lorentz factor $\Gamma \sim 10$ that are oriented close to the line of sight for nearly their entire length. Alternatively (Dermer & Atoyan 2002), the X-rays may be synchrotron emission from high energy electrons suffering Compton losses in the Klein-Nishina regime. These particles are often required to be in a separate high-energy population (Hardcastle et al. 2004; Hardcastle 2006). In this case, the X-ray and optical emission require in situ particle acceleration, as the radiating particles have lifetimes of a few to hundreds of years, much shorter than the particle’s time to travel down the jet. Those emissions would then provide an excellent probe of the physics in jet regions where particle acceleration is happening. A third model (upstream Compton; Georganopolous & Kazanas 2003), proposes a decelerating jet, with electrons in the faster, upstream flow scattering photons produced in the slow downstream flow, thus contributing to the X-ray emission.

Discriminating between these models relies on several diagnostics, including component spectral energy distributions (SEDs) and differences between radio and X-ray jet morphology (Jester et al. 2006; Kharb et al. 2012). We have proposed two diagnostics that can rule out the EC/CMB model. The first of these (Poutanen & Vilhu 1993; Krawczynski 2012) relies on the fact that except for scatterings from low-energy particles ($\gamma \sim 1$) inverse-Comptonized CMB radiation should be unpolarized, reflecting the unpolarized nature of the seed photon population. This diagnostic was first used by Cara et al. (2013) to almost completely rule out the EC/CMB model for one quasar jet, PKS 1136-135. Another diagnostic (Georganopoulos et al. 2006) relies on the fact that the observed synchrotron emission at IR and lower energies must also be Comptonized, resulting in a minimum level of GeV gamma-ray emission. This has ruled out the EC/CMB model for the jets of 3C 273 and PKS 0637-752 (Meyer & Georganopolous 2014; Meyer et al. 2015). Finally, in a few FR IIs (e.g., Pictor A, Marshall et al. 2010; Gentry et al. 2015; Hardcastle et al. 2016) that are viewed at larger angles, the broadband SED even suggests synchrotron emission without requiring a separate, high-energy electron population.

See, e.g., https://hea-www.harvard.edu/XJET/
With all of these different possibilities, one of the most basic needs for investigating models of both jet emission and physics is to find ideal testing grounds. Only a very few prototype jets, that are bright in several bands at low redshifts, and minimally bent, are known. Here we discuss a new, prototype jet.

3C 111 is a powerful FR II radio galaxy (Fanaroff & Riley 1974) at \(z = 0.0485\) (Hewitt & Burbidge 1991). Our HST images (Sections 2–3) show that the host galaxy is a bright giant elliptical with somewhat distorted outer isophotes, and several prominent companions within 50 kpc. On parsec scales, VLBI observations show component speeds as high as 8c in the approaching, northern jet (Lister et al. 2013). Shallow, 10 ks Chandra X-Ray Observatory survey observations by Hogan et al. (2011) revealed X-ray emission from three knots in the northern jet (which we call K30, K61, and K97) and the northern hotspot (NHS). The jet is extremely long (nearly 4 arcminutes) and its host galaxy resides in a rich optical environment. Here we discuss the results of new, deep observations with both Chandra and the Hubble Space Telescope (HST). These observations not only confirm the results of Hogan et al. (2011) but also reveal near-IR and X-ray emission from several components in the 3C 111 jet, as well as the southern (receding) hotspot.

This paper is laid out as follows: in Section 2, we describe our observations and data reduction methods. Section 3 shows the results and discusses the broadband spectrum of the jet components. We close in Section 4 by stating our conclusions. Throughout this paper we assume \(\Omega_m = 0.27, \Omega_{\Lambda} = 0.73, \Omega_r = 0, \text{ and } H_0 = 71 \text{ km s}^{-1} \text{ Mpc}^{-1}\).

2. OBSERVATIONS AND DATA REDUCTIONS

2.1. Chandra Observations

Chandra has observed 3C 111 three times with the ACIS-S. In 2008, a shallow, 10 ks survey observation (data set 701719) was taken (Hogan et al. 2011), which discovered the X-ray emission from the jet. On 2013 January 10–11, we obtained much deeper observations (data set 702798), for a total on-source time of 127 ks. These observations were gathered using alternating exposure mode, with interleaved frame times of 1.5 s (×4) and 0.3 s (×1) during each cycle. This was done in order to enable us to minimize the effect of pileup in the region of the quasar nucleus, while at the same time keeping the majority of the time optimized for detection of fainter sources in a broader field. It reduced efficiency by 15%, giving us a total exposure time of 92 ks (1.5 s frame time only), but allowed us to discriminate inner jet knots from emission due to the active galactic nucleus (AGN) in the innermost 10 arcsec, where pileup is a factor, by using the 0.3 s frame time data (17 ks exposure time). These observations were augmented on 2014 November 4–5 by ACIS/HETG observations (150 ks, PI F. Tombesi, data set 703007).

All observations were reduced in CIAO version 4.8.0, using CALDB v. 4.7.0, with standard screening criteria and calibration files provided by the Chandra X-ray Center. Pixel randomization was removed, and only events in grades 0, 2 – 4, and 6 were retained. We also checked for flaring background events. No significant flaring events were found, so we did not have to filter by time. We subsampled the native Chandra resolution by 4, leading to a pixel scale of 0.123 arcsec/pixel. Data sets 702798 and 703007 were combined to obtain the images discussed in this paper. We chose not to incorporate the much shallower data set 701719 into that analysis because of its poor statistics. To show the extended structure, we smoothed the X-ray image adaptively using the CIAO task csMOOTH, smoothing only below a minimum significance of 4.9.

2.2. HST Observations

HST observed 3C 111 on 2013 January 30 for three orbits, using the Wide-field Camera 3 (WFC3). Images were gathered both in the UVIS channel using the F850LP filter (1 orbit) and in the IR channel using the F160W filter (2 orbits). Because of the size of the 3C 111 jet-hotspots system, we restricted HST’s orientation so that the jet fell along a chip diagonal in both observations. Unfortunately, for ease of scheduling we had to leave a 10º allowance on the allowed position angle (PA), and the PA that was used placed emission from the NHS at the edge of the field of the UVIS/F850LP observation. To compensate for this, we located archival observations obtained on 1996 February 26 with the Wide-Field and Planetary Camera 2 (WFPC2) with the F791W filter (PI Meisenheimer). These latter observations include only the NHS and some of the northern jet. Because of the small field of view, two pointings were necessary in the IR channel, while one pointing was deemed adequate in the UVIS. In addition, we used a standard, 2-position dither pattern at each location in each band. This, combined with the multiple readouts, was more than adequate to remove bad pixels and cosmic rays in the IR/F160W observation, but in the UVIS/F850LP observation it was not adequate, and there were a significant number of pixels that had cosmic ray strikes in both images. In addition to the above there exist two shorter observations obtained with NICMOS and WFC2 (PI Sparks). Table 1 gives details of all HST observations.

All HST images were re-calibrated in PYRAF using the most up-to-date reference files (i.e., flat field, distortion correction table, etc.) obtained from the STScI Calibration Database system. We corrected for charge transfer efficiency (CTE) effects in the UVIS/F850LP data using the recipe of Anderson et al. (2012) and in the WFPC2 data using the recipe of Dolphin (2000) and Riess (2000). In the UVIS/F850LP data we also pre-processed the data using L.A. Cosmic10 (van Dokkum 2001) prior to drizzling. This significantly decreased the number of cosmic rays affecting the final image. We used the Astrodrrizzle task (Gonzaga et al. 2012) from the STSCI_PYTHON package to drizzle-combine the images for each of the two filter combinations. Besides combining the images, Astrodrrizzle distortion-corrects the images, performs image flat-fielding, cosmic-ray rejection, image alignment, and other tasks. Prior to any analysis, the HST data had to be galaxy-subtracted. This was done using the tasks ellipse and bmodel. The model fitting was done iteratively, excluding nearby stars and galaxies (note that 3C 111 lies in a fairly dense cluster of galaxies).

Local background regions were used to determine the blank sky noise emission for each source aperture. Sigma clipping was used to eliminate any pixel values that deviated beyond 3σ from the median. Photon noise was estimated by multiplying the weight map created by Astrodrrizzle with our science image (in counts/second) to obtain the number of counts in

9 This smoothed image was not used for scientific measurements, but is useful for illustrative purposes.

10 See http://www.astro.yale.edu/dokkum/lacosmic/.
Table 1

| Date       | Program | Instrument | Band       | \(\lambda_{\text{pivot}}\) (nm) | Width (nm) | \(T_{\text{int}}\) (s) |
|------------|---------|------------|------------|----------------------------------|------------|------------------------|
| 30 Jan 2013| 13114   | WFC3/UVIS  | F850LP     | 916.6                            | 118.2      | 2534                   |
| 30 Jan 2013| 13114   | WFC3/IR    | F160W      | 1536.9                           | 268.3      | 2606\(^6\)            |
| 26 Feb 1996| 5931    | WFPC2      | F901W      | 788.1                            | 123.1      | 53400\(^6\)           |
| 08 Dec 2004| 10173   | NICMOS/NIC2| F160W      | 1600                             | 400        | 1152\(^6\)            |
| 19 Nov 1995| 5476    | WFPC2      | F702W      | 691.9                            | 138.5      | 600\(^6\)             |

Notes.
\(^{a}\) Two pointings. Integration time is per pointing.
\(^{b}\) Field includes only one knot region (K9) and image is not deep enough to confirm its detection.
\(^{c}\) Very shallow image, does not show jet, not used.

...each sky-subtracted source region. Read noise was taken from the header values in each image; dark current was estimated from the dark reference file indicated in the header.

Aperture photometry was done on the images using the apertures shown in Figure 1. Aperture correction was done following the recommendations of the WFCC Data Handbook (Deustua 2016), while for the WFPC2 data set it was done following Holtzman et al. (1995). Conversion to flux units was performed by multiplying image data in electrons s\(^{-1}\) by the corresponding values for all images. 3C 111 is at a low galactic latitude (\(b_{\text{HI}} = 8°8\)), relatively near the Taurus molecular cloud (the nearest large star-forming region in our Galaxy), Ungerecht et al. (1985), in their detailed optical and radio study, pointed out that the region of the cloud in front of 3C 111 is not the densest part (see Figure 3 of Ungerecht et al. 1985). This result is also supported by the results of the XMM-Newton Extended Survey of the Taurus Molecular Cloud project (Güdel et al. 2007). Due to the presence of this molecular cloud, galactic extinction is unfortunately high, with \(A_V = 4.5\) mag assuming a standard \(R_V = 3.1\) (Schlegel et al. 1998; Schlafly & Finkbeiner 2011). We note that Meisenheimer et al. (1997) used a much lower value for the extinction to 3C 111, stemming from the earlier survey of Burstein & Heiles (1982) (see also Section 3).

3. RESULTS

The 3C 111 jet can be seen across the electromagnetic spectrum, from the radio through the X-rays. In Figure 1, we show our deep Chandra imaging of 3C 111, along with archival VLA imaging (Leahy et al. 1997). X-ray emission is evident in at least eight jet regions, plus the northern and southern hotspot. This emission is also seen in the near-IR, as shown in Figure 2, which shows close-ups of three jet regions in the F160W image, respectively the NHS, inner jet, and southern hotspots. The near-IR image shows emission from most, but not all X-ray emitting jet regions. In the F850LP and F791W images, the only jet or jet-related emission that can be seen comes from the northern hotspot. This is likely a result of the high Galactic extinction toward 3C 111. Most of the panels in Figures 1 and 2 show one image as grayscale and another as contours, allowing us to compare the morphology in different bands. To aid in this comparison, we named the northern jet features using the distance in arcseconds from the nucleus. Thus, as an example, knot K14 has its flux maximum 14" from the nucleus.

3.1. Jet Morphology

There is significant evidence of differences between the radio, near-IR and X-ray morphology, as seen in Figures 1 and 2, as well as in Figure 3, which shows the profile of relative flux (each normalized to 1 at an arbitrary point) along the jet in the Chandra, F160W, and VLA images. We note that there are strong differences between the radio, near-IR, and X-ray fluxes. The near-IR and X-ray morphology are discussed in detail here. The radio morphology will be discussed in more detail in a future paper, where we also discuss follow-on deep JVLA observations. In the next sub-section, we will discuss the SED of the jet features, including the X-ray and optical spectral indices for the knots where it was possible to extract such information. In registering the three data sets to a common frame of reference, we assumed the VLA map to be the fiducial, adhering to the usual IAU standard. The HST images were registered to this frame by hand, as the Guide Star Catalog alignment always has errors of near arcsecond level, assuming that the optical and radio AGN core positions were identical. To register the Chandra data to this frame, we followed the CIAO task wavdetect “Correcting Absolute Astrometry,” using CIAO task wavdetect to match sources in the 2MASS catalog in the Chandra images. This yielded a final offset of about 0.042 from the radio. We also merged the data from data sets 702798 and 703007 using reproject_obs in CIAO. Following this, the 1σ errors in the positions from the HST image are <0.032, while those in the X-ray image are ±0.016 relative to the radio frame of reference according to Rots & Budavari (2011), although to be conservative for this purpose we used 0.03.

Components within ~20" of the nucleus have flux profiles in the X-rays that are mixed with that of the unresolved nuclear source due to the Chandra point-spread function (PSF) (see Figure 3), and are somewhat piled up in the long frame time, undispersed Chandra image, and within 10"–15" the knots also lie within the galaxy seen in the optical/near-IR image. However, despite this, we can make a few remarks about how the radio, optical, and X-ray morphologies compare, using the short frame time data from the interleaved data set (702798) as well as the Order 0 HETG image (data set 703007). Knot K9’s X-ray morphology (Figure 1) has a strong peak toward its upstream end that is not seen in the radio. Unfortunately, however, it lies too close to the diffraction spike in the F160W image to fully characterize in the near-IR. Knot K14 appears to peak slightly closer to the nucleus in the radio image than in either the near-IR or X-rays. X-ray emission is clearly seen downstream of that component extending nearly continuously to knot K30. That emission is not seen in either the near-IR or
the radio (the near-IR emission that is present is more likely due to subtle galaxy features in the same region, as shown in the middle panel of Figure 2). That X-ray emission includes a knot seen only in the X-rays, knot K22.

Knot K30, seen in all three bands, has an X-ray flux peak that is located significantly upstream of either the radio or near-IR one (Figure 4), with the near-IR peak located closer to the nucleus than the radio one. The X-ray flux from K30 also declines much more quickly with increasing distance from the nucleus than in either the near-IR or radio, which show similar decline rates (Figure 3). The K40-K45 region is also complex. The radio flux of K40 displays two peaks, with the near-IR peak associated with the one closer to the nucleus. The X-ray emission, however, does not peak until 42″ from the nucleus, where there is an apparent radio minimum. The radio emission picks up again between 43″ and 45″, while through that region and extending out to nearly 50″, the X-ray emission appears roughly continuous and there is no significant X-ray knot at 51″ from the nucleus as there is in the radio. Moving further out, there is a flux maximum at about 55″ from the nucleus in the radio image that is not seen in the X-ray or F160W images. Knot K61, which represents an apparent “kink” in the jet, is seen in both the radio and X-rays. Its X-ray morphology has a “corkscrew” like appearance that is not prominent in the radio,
where only its downstream half can be seen. In the optical/near-IR, K61 unfortunately lies very near a bright foreground star and so while there is possible emission in the near-IR it lies too close to the star or its diffraction spikes to have confidence in its detection and/or measure a flux.

Four regions are seen within the extended lobes. Within the northern lobe we see knots K97 and K107, as well as the flux maximum of the NHS itself. While these three hotspots have outwardly similar morphologies in the X-ray, near-IR, and radio, close examination reveals important differences. In particular, it is only in the radio that one appreciates the extent of the northern lobe, which extends for over 30" in a "plume" shape that includes both K97 and K107. In the X-ray and near-IR, we see only the three hotspots (with K97 barely detected), plus extensions to the NHS in two directions, the first being back upstream pointing at K107, and the second one pointing off to the southwest parallel to the flux contours defining the lobe’s southern edge. The latter could indicate material outflowing from the hotspot, similar to what has been postulated for the 3C 273 jet by Röser et al. (1996), while the general shape of the jet in that region indicates that the jet does bend as it enters the lobe. A close look at the NHS itself

Figure 2. HST images of the jet of 3C 111, obtained with the WFC3/IR + F160W. All four panels show the HST image in grayscale, with contours from the radio image over-plotted in blue. A galaxy model has been subtracted from the HST image (see Section 3). At top left, we show the brighter, northern hotspot, which is well resolved both parallel to and perpendicular to the jet direction. The top right and bottom left images show the inner part of the northern jet, specifically the part extending from about 5" to about 65" from the nucleus. The bright linear feature in the bottom left panel is a diffraction spike. At bottom right, we show the fainter, southern hotspot, which is also well resolved. The X-ray detected knots have been labeled in green.
also reveals that its flux maximum is not located at the same position in the radio, near-IR/optical, and X-ray, with the X-ray maximum seen upstream of the maxima seen in the near-IR/optical and radio (which are aligned with each other). This misalignment, which is suggestive but not firm at the 2.5σ–3σ significance level, is shown in Figures 1 and 2, and quantified in Figure 4. In addition, we also see for the first time X-ray and near-IR emission from the SHS. The radio and near-IR emission from the SHS flux are well aligned (Figure 2), while there simply are not enough photons detected in the Chandra image to firm up the comparison between its X-ray and optical flux maximum position, as only 32 ± 8 counts are seen from the SHS and the X-ray emission is signiﬁcantly extended.

3.2. Jet SED

We have extracted fluxes and SEDs for all jet and hotspot regions. The sky regions used are shown in Figure 1 as green ellipses. The results are given in Table 2. Where a component is not detected in a given band, we give a 2σ upper limit. The optical and near-IR fluxes were extracted from the galaxy-subtracted images and are corrected for extinction using the published value of $A_V$. In addition, for the near-IR and optical fluxes we also subtracted the average flux from a radial ring at the same distance from the nucleus, in order to minimize galaxy subtraction residuals. This was necessary because of the rather disturbed morphology of the host galaxy as well as the presence of several bright, nearby companion galaxies as well as bright stars. To convert the optical and near-IR count rates into fluxes we used the header information from SYNPHOT. By default, these assume a flat spectrum ($\alpha \approx 0$, $F_\nu \propto \nu^{-0}$); however, the errors from this assumption are typically less than 5% in these wide bands. The fluxes in a given band are assumed to be centered at the band’s pivot wavelength.

The X-ray spectra of the three brightest regions in the 3C 111 jet (knots K30 and K61, and the NHS) were extracted using specextract. The extraction regions used are shown on Figure 1. Background spectra were obtained using annular regions at the same radii as the components itself, and excluding the readout streak. We used unweighted ARFs and RMFs and corrected for the PSF. Spectral fitting was done in Sherpa using XSpec models xshabs and xpowerlaw.

Determining the correct column density of absorption for 3C 111 is complicated, as it is known that the source shows an additional absorbing column in excess of the Galactic value of $N_H = 3.0 \times 10^{21}$ cm$^{-2}$ (e.g., Reynolds et al. 1998; Ballo et al. 2011; Tombesi et al. 2013). For this analysis, we have used Galactic absorption with a column density of $N_H = (8.6 \pm 0.02) \times 10^{21}$ cm$^{-2}$. This was determined from the Chandra HETG data set, the full analysis of which will be discussed in a future paper (F. Tombesi et al. 2016, in preparation). The other Chandra data sets of 3C 111 suffer from pileup in the region of the quasar nucleus, making it impossible to accurately determine the value of $N_H$ from them—e.g., using our 0.3 s frame time data to fit the absorption gives a value of $5.04 \times 10^{21}$ cm$^{-2}$. An $N_H$ of $8.6 \times 10^{21}$ cm$^{-2}$

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**Figure 3.** Relative flux as a function of distance from the nucleus for the approaching jet of 3C 111, as seen in the radio (VLA image, blue trace), near-IR (HST/WFC3 IR/F160W image, green trace) and X-rays (Chandra image, red trace). Each of the three traces was extracted from a slice 1″7476 wide, along a vector extending from the nucleus of the galaxy through the NHS. Major knot regions are labeled above the traces. See Section 2 for details on the alignment of the three images, and see Section 3 for discussion.

**Figure 4.** Close-up views of the K30 (top) and NHS (bottom) regions of the Chandra image, showing the location of the flux maxima in the radio (blue), near-IR (green), and X-ray (red) bands. The sizes of the error bars on each position are shown. Radio contours are overlaid in cyan.
Table 2
Jet Component Flux Densities

| Region | Radio (mJy) | F160W (μJy) | F850LP (μJy) | F791W (μJy) | 2 keV (mJy) |
|--------|------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| K9     | 6.91 ± 0.30 | 4.88 ± 0.12 | <8          | ...         | 1.07 ± 0.20 |
| K14    | 9.35 ± 0.44 | 5.38 ± 0.15 | <10         | ...         | 0.91 ± 0.16 |
| K22    | 3.78 ± 0.42 | 0.46 ± 0.20 | <11         | ...         | 0.40 ± 0.11 |
| K30    | 13.15 ± 0.60 | 8.75 ± 0.23 | ...         | <11         | 2.26 ± 0.26 |
| K40    | 8.25 ± 0.44 | 2.13 ± 0.20 | <14         | 7.7     | 0.35 ± 0.09 |
| K45    | 11.96 ± 0.52 | 1.13 ± 0.25 | <17         | 9.9     | 0.55 ± 0.11 |
| K51    | 6.03 ± 0.49 | 1.72 ± 0.18 | <16         | 8.8     | 0.22 ± 0.08 |
| K61    | 38.13 ± 0.95 | 1.77 ± 0.46 | <22         | 23.9    | 4.38 ± 0.40 |
| K97    | 27.88 ± 0.42 | 2.01 ± 0.28 | <11         | 6.8     | 0.59 ± 0.09 |
| K107   | 58.00 ± 0.51 | 4.70 ± 0.36 | <16         | 12.0    | 0.18 ± 0.06 |
| NHS    | 610.31 ± 0.47 | 121.0 ± 0.6  | ...         | 44.3 ± 4.0 | 1.86 ± 0.21 |
| SHS    | 182.52 ± 0.63 | 13.39 ± 0.53 | <22         | ...     | 0.35 ± 0.09 |

Notes.
- * Flux quoted is a 2σ upper limit.
- b Knot is off chip.
- c Located in chip gap.
- d Bright star plus diffraction spikes within region.
- e At chip border, significant part of region off chip.

Table 3
Jet Component X-Ray Spectra

| Region | Normalization (ergs cm⁻² s⁻¹) | α | \(\chi^2\) |
|--------|-------------------------------|---|---------|
| K30    | (4.27 ± 0.58) × 10⁻¹⁴         | 0.76 ± 0.29 | 0.944 |
| K61    | (8.28 ± 0.82) × 10⁻¹⁴         | 1.01 ± 0.21 | 0.985 |
| NHS    | (3.49 ± 0.48) × 10⁻¹⁴         | 0.83 ± 0.28 | 0.927 |

is consistent with previous expectations (see also Tombesi et al. 2013).

We used the CSTAT statistic in Sherpa as well as the Simplex (aka Nelder–Mead) fitting optimization method because of their robustness in low-signal cases. These fits were all checked using the Monte-Carlo method, and the results matched those of Simplex. The CSTAT statistic in Sherpa is equivalent to the Cash statistic but allows for easier checking of the goodness-of-fit. We checked the goodness-of-fit in two ways: first, by looking at the reduced statistic; and second, by running a simulation of the model and using plot_cdf to check that the cumulative distribution function had a median at about 0.5. The fitting was done for 0.5–7 keV on unbinned data. The flux was determined from the calc_energy_flux function, over a range of 0.5–7 keV. Simulations were also used to determine the error in the flux value. Errors in flux are given at 68% confidence, while the error in photon index and normalization are given at 90% confidence intervals. This yielded the X-ray spectral indices given in Table 3. As can be seen, all three regions have X-ray spectral indices between \(\alpha = 0.76\) to \(\alpha = 1.01\). The X-ray fluxes from other jet regions were corrected for scattered light from the AGN itself using annular regions at the same radius as the component itself. The X-ray count rates for all these regions were corrected for Galactic absorption. For the three regions where X-ray spectral fitting was possible, we used the power-law fits given in Table 3. For all other regions, we used a power-law index of \(\alpha = 0.87\), equal to the average of the three regions fit.

We show the resulting SEDs for all the components in Figure 5. For regions K30, K61, and the NHS, we use the fitted X-ray flux and spectral index. Figure 5 also includes ground-based K and R-band fluxes for the NHS that were previously published in Meisenheimer et al. (1997), corrected with updated values for the Galactic extinction (squares in the lower right panel, see discussion in Section 2.2), as well as a 1.3 mm flux from IRAM (Meisenheimer et al. 1989). The 1.3 mm IRAM point lies very close to the power law (\(\alpha_R = 0.85\)) extrapolated from the 8.4 GHz observation of Leahy et al. (1997). The apparent discrepancy between our F160W flux (Table 2, circles in Figure 5) and the extrapolation of the K-to-R band spectral index from Meisenheimer et al. (1997) merits further discussion. We chose a slightly larger aperture than Meisenheimer et al. (1997), to include faint extended flux not seen by those authors, as shown in Figure 6. This is only 3% of the total, and both after and before this, our F791W flux is within 1σ of the Meisenheimer et al. (1997) K to R band extrapolation. While it is possible that our flux in F160W is incorrect, we consider this unlikely given our careful choice of a source-free background region (Figure 6) and the well-established nature of the HST flux scale. Alternately, the K-band flux measurement of Meisenheimer et al. (1997) was affected by either poor background subtraction or poor flux calibration. We favor this explanation, as due to the crowded field (Figures 3, 6) it is likely that the background region in a ground-based image, like that of Meisenheimer et al. (1997) would include flux from one or more neighboring objects, thus causing an apparent underestimate of the source flux. We were unable to confirm this with the authors of Meisenheimer et al. (1997), however.

As can be seen, most of the jet components have diverse SED shapes that naively can be fit by synchrotron emission from a single electron population. For example, knots K45 and K97 appear to be fit reasonably well by single power laws extending up to X-ray energies, and most other knots have X-ray flux that is significantly below the extrapolation of the radio-near-IR power law. However, we do not favor this simple interpretation, as in the NHS the fitted X-ray spectral slope is much harder than the extrapolation of the radio to optical.
synchrotron component, while in knot K61 the X-ray flux is a factor of about 4 higher than a simple extrapolation of the radio to near-IR power law. Thus a second emission component is necessary to fit the SED of these jet knots and possibly others. In broad terms, such a spectral shape has been seen before in other quasar jets (e.g., PKS 0637–752, knots WK7.8 and WK8.7, Mehta et al. 2009), and requires either a contribution from another, inverse-Compton mechanism (the so-called EC/CMB mechanism), or alternately a second, entirely distinct high-energy electron population to account for the X-ray emission. Here, however, the fitted X-ray spectra combined with the fact that the X-ray emission of knot K30 and the NHS has a maximum at a different location than the near-IR or optical emission, makes the two-component synchrotron interpretation much more likely. Additionally, a Doppler factor of \( \delta \geq 45 \) is required to explain the observed properties of the NHS flux if EC/CMB is the dominant emission mechanism at work (see Section 4.2).

4. PHYSICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The jet of 3C 111 is unique for several reasons. Chief among these are the fact that both the approaching and receding hotspots can be seen in all bands, and its extreme length, with X-ray and near-IR components seen in the jet for more than 100 arcsec. The data we present here can be used to place a variety of constraints on both the kinematics of the jet as well as the X-ray emission mechanism. In Section 4.1, we use the detection of both the approaching and receding hotspots, as well as VLBA observations, to comment on the kinematics of the jet, while in Section 4.2 we discuss efforts to model the X-ray spectrum and broadband SED of the brightest knots to constrain their emission mechanism in the X-rays.

4.1. Jet Deceleration

The flux ratio between the northern and southern hotspots can be used to determine the permitted values for \( \beta \) and \( \theta \) by
between the X-ray and radio. We see a clear deceleration from VLBA results as well as the unrelated foreground or background source. We believe that it is likely that the Meisenheimer et al. background scale to \( S_{1} = \left( \frac{1 + \beta \cos \theta}{1 - \beta \cos \theta} \right)^{2+\alpha} \) (e.g., Boettcher et al. 2012). We do this individually for the radio, near-IR, and X-ray bands. Here, \( \theta \) is the angle to the line of sight, \( \beta = v/c \), and \( \alpha \) is the spectral index for each band (0.85 for radio, 1.50 for near-IR, and 0.83 for X-ray; see Figure 5, lower right panel and discussion in Section 3.2). The jet/counterjet hotspot flux ratio differs significantly between bands: 3.34 ± 0.01 in the radio, 9.03 ± 0.36 in the near-IR, and 5.34 ± 1.61 in the X-ray. This equation makes the assumptions that the jet and counterjet are exactly identical and 180° apart. Jorstad et al. (2005) used VLBA observations and determined the most likely viewing angle to be 18°1 ± 5°0 on the parsec scale. We found the permitted range of \( \beta \) and \( \theta \) for the VLBA scale by using their value for the transverse \( \beta_T \) apparent to solve

\[
\beta_T = \frac{\beta \sin \theta}{1 - \beta \cos \theta}.
\]

Figure 7 shows the \( \beta \) versus \( \theta \) plot for the parsec-scale VLBA results as well as the \( \sim 100 \) kpc scale hotspots using our data. We see a clear deceleration from \( \beta \sim 0.96 \) at the parsec scale to \( \beta \sim 0.2-0.4 \) at the hotspot, with the velocity of the radio-emitting plasma significantly slower than that of the X-ray- and near-IR-emitting plasma. This is consistent with the two-component synchrotron model due to the fact that the radio- and X-ray-emitting electron populations appear to be moving at significantly different velocities, however, it may require that the near-IR-emitting electrons do not occupy the entire jet cross-section, as in the simplest version of this scenario the near-IR and radio emission come from the same spectral component. Given the relatively modest beaming we find, it is interesting that no jet components are seen in the counterjet between the nucleus and SHS. Additional \( HST \) and \( Chandra \) observations are required to better constrain the near-IR spectral index and elaborate on these issues. Oh et al. (2015) more recently used VLBI observations to constrain the viewing angle of 3C 111 on mas scales to \( \theta \lesssim 20° \) and the intrinsic velocity to \( \beta \gtrsim 0.98 \), in agreement with the findings of Jorstad et al. (2005). Given the large assumptions and the probable complex structure and dynamics of the hotspot regions, this analysis serves to place an upper limit on the amount of beaming in the jet. The analysis is inconsistent with a highly beamed jet, as we would expect the jet/counterjet hotspot flux ratio to be larger if beaming were higher.

The spectral index used for the radio is based on the assumption that the slope is constant up to the near-IR. We plan to improve on this value in a future paper where we analyze \( JVLA \) observations (C, X, and Ku bands) of 3C 111. A harder spectral index for the radio would increase the likely value for \( \beta \), however, the offset would not be large enough to bring it into agreement with the near-IR, where the \( \Delta \beta \sim 0.1 \). This uncertainty does not affect the small \( \Delta \beta \) between the X-ray and near-IR, though the near-IR spectral slope could change a small amount with additional \( HST \) bands to fit the slope.

While the viewing angle has a rather large uncertainty, the \( \beta \) value is much more constrained. The relative difference in \( \beta \) between bands is preserved no matter the viewing angle, adding to the evidence that there are two electron populations moving at significantly different speeds.

The jet to counterjet length ratio is in relatively good agreement with the radio jet to counterjet flux ratio. The approaching jet is \( \sim 121 \) arcsec in length and the counterjet is \( \sim 74 \) arcsec in length, giving a length ratio of 0.61. For a jet moving at a constant speed \( \beta \) and angle \( \theta \), we expect the ratio of the lengths to be equal to \( (1 - \beta \cos \theta)/(1 + \beta \cos \theta) \). This matches well with our observed value for \( \theta = 18°1 \), giving a value of \( \beta = 0.254 \) (Figure 7), although this depends on how
the approaching and receding jets decelerate (e.g., Ryle & Longair 1967) and whether there is bending in either jet.

4.2. Modeling of the SED

The spectral indices we have obtained for K30, K61, and the NHS are all such that they must lie on either the low-energy tail or near the turnover of the second emission component. Synchrotron and EC/CMB models predict differing slopes for the emission from the very lowest energy electrons, namely \( \alpha = -1/3 \) for synchrotron and \( \alpha = -1 \) for EC/CMB (e.g., Stawarz & Petrosian 2008; Dermer et al. 2009). If the observed spectral index at any part of the low-energy tail were to become significantly harder than \(-1/3\), then that would rule out synchrotron as the dominant emission mechanism.

Figure 8 shows the spectral indices for various overlapping energy ranges. All three regions are in good agreement with constant spectral slopes across the entire 0.5–7.0 keV band. Using the parsec-scale viewing angle of 18°, and the associated values for \( \beta \) from Figure 7, we can make approximations for the values of \( \Gamma \) and \( \delta = [\Gamma (1 - \beta \cos \theta)]^{-1} \) in order to model the SED for the synchrotron and EC/CMB cases for the NHS.

Figure 9 shows several attempts at modeling the SED of K61 and the NHS with varying parameters for the synchrotron model using the Compton Sphere suite.\(^{11}\) In the case of K61, our near-IR and X-ray data serve to constrain the low-energy tail of the second emission component. However, because the near-IR spectrum for K61 is not available, we are not able to determine whether the detected flux is dominated by the first or second emission components—the spectrum could be either falling in the near-IR as the first synchrotron component dies off, or it could be rising as the second emission component ramps up. Future \( HST \) observations would allow us to constrain which emission component is responsible for the detected near-IR flux. We have plotted two example models for the second emission component showing these possibilities using a magnetic field strength ranging over \( B = (1-3.2) \times 10^{-5} \) G, with \( \gamma_{\text{max}} = (3.6-10) \times 10^9 \), and \( \gamma_{\text{min}} = (1.3-3.6) \times 10^7 \), with

\(^{11}\) Found at http://astro.umbc.edu/compton.
a comoving luminosity of $2.15 \times 10^{42} \text{ erg s}^{-1}$. The magnetic field strength $B$ and fitted $\gamma_{\text{max}}$ values translate to a radiative lifetime of $\sim$100 years, which is difficult to explain without distributed in situ acceleration—this requirement can be relaxed by using a lower value of $B$.

Varying several of the input parameters can have a large effect on the shape of the curve above 7 keV for K61 and especially in the case of the NHS. The bottom of Figure 9 shows several representative models for the SED of the NHS near the NuSTAR energy band. Unlike K61, the low-energy tail of the second emission component of the NHS is not constrained by the radio or near-IR data. The models shown here vary wildly in emission above 7 keV, where the magnetic field strengths ranges over $B = (0.2-1) \times 10^{-4} \text{ G}$, with $\gamma_{\text{max}} = (1.9-100) \times 10^{5}$, and $\gamma_{\text{min}} = (5.2-27) \times 10^{3}$, with a comoving luminosity of $1 \times 10^{43} \text{ erg s}^{-1}$. Future observations using NuSTAR would allow us to constrain the SED up to $\sim 80 \text{ keV}$.

If the X-ray emission is due only to EC/CMB, then an estimate of the magnetic field strength can be made using

$$S_{\text{sync}} = \frac{(2 \times 10^{14} T)^{3/2}}{8\pi \rho} \gamma_{\text{sync}}^{-2} / B_{\mu G}^{1/2},$$

(3)

(Felten & Morrison 1966), where $\rho = \Gamma^2 \rho_0 (1+z)^4$ is the apparent energy density of the CMB at redshift $z$, $\rho_0 = 4.19 \times 10^{-13} \text{ erg cm}^{-3}$ is the local CMB energy density, the apparent temperature of the CMB is $\delta T$, and the temperature of the CMB is $T = 2.728 (1+z) \text{ K}$. This calculation gives a value of $B \approx 7.9 \times 10^{-5} \text{ G}$. While this is comparable to that quoted for other jets where the EC/CMB model is used to model their X-ray emission, in this case a comoving luminosity of $\sim 10^{51} \text{ erg s}^{-1}$ is required to fit the model to our X-ray data. We feel this is unrealistic, as it would violate the Eddington limit by many orders of magnitude. For that reason, we have not shown it in any figure.

Additionally, assuming an equipartition magnetic field, a Doppler factor of $\delta \sim 45$ is required for EC/CMB to explain the observed X-ray/radio NHS flux even for the case of $\theta = 0^\circ$ using standard formulae (Harris & Krawczynski 2002). The required beaming is highly unlikely given the observed properties of the 3C 111 jet, e.g., the observed brightness of the SHS and the lack of obvious blazar properties.

We do not have many data points with which to constrain the model of the low-energy synchrotron component, especially in K30 and K61. We expect to be able model its SED well in a follow-up paper using JVLA observations of the jet. As well, additional HST and Chandra observations would help to better constrain the near-IR to optical and X-ray spectral indices of the components, and perhaps also constrain the X-ray emission mechanism of additional components.

5. CONCLUSIONS

We have presented new Chandra and HST observations of 3C 111 that reveal that its jet has eight X-ray and near-IR/optical emitting components, which extend for 121 arcsec (355 kpc deprojected length) from its AGN nucleus in the approaching jet, and also reveal the hotspot emission on the counterjet side. The 3C 111 jet is remarkable for several reasons. While some other jets are comparably long, no other known jet boasts the same combination of length, number of visible components and low redshift that 3C 111 does. For example, the jet of Pic A (Marshall et al. 2010; Gentry et al. 2015; Hardcastle et al. 2016), which is similarly straight, longer in angular extent (almost 4'), and is about 30% nearer, has only three components that have been detected in the near-IR, while the jet of 3C 273 (Jester et al. 2006), which extends for a somewhat greater distance from its host galaxy and is somewhat brighter, is nearly 4x as far at a redshift $z = 0.158$.

The analysis discussed in this paper strongly disfavors the EC/CMB model as the dominant X-ray emission mechanism in several of the components of 3C 111’s jet. The hotspot flux ratio for each of the bands we have shows the jet to have decelerated to, at most, $\beta \sim 0.4$. This, combined with a relatively high viewing angle of $\theta \sim 18^\circ 1$ based on VLBA observations, demands a power requirement many orders of magnitude above the Eddington limit for EC/CMB to be the dominant X-ray emission mechanism of the jet.

We instead favor a two-component synchrotron model. Morphological comparison between radio, near-IR, and X-ray bands for K30 and the NHS show the X-ray flux maxima to be significantly upstream of the maxima in the radio, suggesting the presence of two separate electron populations with distinct energy distributions in these regions. This evidence is compounded by the analysis of the jet/counterjet hotspot flux ratio for each band, which shows the near-IR- and X-ray-emitting electrons to be moving at a significantly faster velocity than that of the radio-emitting electron population.

We have made efforts to model the SED of the high-energy synchrotron emission and determine how future observations using NuSTAR can be used to constrain the emission mechanism. Future HST and Chandra observations will allow us to put further constraints on the SED models for the jet components we have analyzed and test the emission mechanism of additional jet components.

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