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## Technical Memorandum 79626

# High Energy X-Ray Spectra of Cygnus XR-1 Observed from OSO-8

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OF CYGNUS XR-1 OBSERVED FROM OSO-8 (NASA)  
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Space Administration

**Goddard Space Flight Center**  
Greenbelt, Maryland 20771



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## ABSTRACT

X-ray spectra of Cygnus XR-1 were measured with the scintillation spectrometer on board the OSO-8 satellite during a period of one and one-half to three weeks in each of the years from 1975 to 1977. Observations were made when the source was both in a high state and in a low state. Typical spectra of the source between 15 and 250 keV are presented. The spectra are well represented by a single power-law expression whose photon number spectral index,  $\alpha$ , is different for the two intensity states: a typical spectrum observed during the high state has  $\alpha = 1.83 \pm 0.06$  ( $\chi^2_{\min} + 1$ ), while a typical spectrum observed during the low state has  $\alpha = 2.21 \pm 0.18$ . The observed pivoting effect is consistent with two temperature accretion disk models of the X-ray emitting region. No significant break in the spectrum occurs at energies up to 150 keV. The high state as defined in the 3 to 6 keV bandwidth is found to be the higher luminosity state of the X-ray source. One transition from a low to a high state occurred during our observations. The time of occurrence of this and other transitions

is consistent with the hypothesis that all intensity transitions occur near periastron of the binary system, and that such transitions are caused by changes in the mass transfer rate between the primary and the accretion disk around the secondary.

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# HIGH ENERGY X-RAY SPECTRA OF CYGNUS XR-1

## OBSERVED FROM OSO-8

### I. INTRODUCTION

Cygnus XR-1 has been an object of continuing interest since its discovery by Bowyer, et al., (1965). It is one of the strongest celestial X-ray sources observed at the Earth, has a hard X-ray spectrum, and is variable at all X-ray energies. Further, the source is identified with the secondary in the binary system whose primary is HDE 226868 (Webster and Murdin 1972; Tananbaum, et al., 1972), and spectroscopic studies in the optical have led to models in which the secondary can only be a black hole (cf. Bolton 1975). Observations of this source above 20 keV would help to resolve the question of whether the shape and temporal behavior of its spectrum are consistent with that expected from models of the system which attribute the X-radiation to an accretion disk surrounding a black hole secondary (cf. Shapiro, Lightman and Eardley 1976; Eardley and Lightman 1976). Knowledge of the source's variability at higher energies would also increase our ability to determine the cause of the long-term variability present in its X-ray luminosity. For all of these reasons, Cyg XR-1 was considered worthy of extended study whenever accessible to observations with the high-energy scintillation spectrometer on board the OSO-8 satellite.

A complete description of the instrument and its operating environment is given by Dennis, et al., (1977). The spectrometer is located in the rotating



wheel section of the satellite. The CsI(Na) scintillation spectrometer has a sensitive area of  $27.5 \text{ cm}^2$  and is actively collimated with additional CsI shielding which provides a circular field of view of  $5.1^\circ$  full width at half maximum (FWHM). An associated 256 channel pulse height analyzer on the spacecraft together with a choice of electronic gains available on command from the ground allows the analysis of incident spectra between photon energies of 10 keV and 3 MeV. The instrument is mounted with the axis of its field of view offset by  $5^\circ$  from the (negative) spin axis of the rotating wheel. Once every 10 s, the period of rotation of the wheel, a source positioned  $5^\circ$  from the spin axis will pass through the center of the field of view. The measured energy resolution (FWHM/E) of the detector is 21% at 662 keV and 43% at 59.6 keV.

Because of the pointing requirements of the spacecraft, the spin axis is constrained to precess around the sky once every year. The resultant geometry allows the spacecraft to view the position of Cyg XR-1 for a maximum duration of approximately three weeks each year. The observations described here were made during the periods listed in Table I.

## II. OBSERVATIONS

The raw counting rates from the source were determined in the manner described by Dolan, *et al.*, (1977a). These pulse height spectra were then reduced to the photon spectra incident at the detector by the matrix inversion technique described by Dolan (1972). The effect of the finite energy resolution of



Table I  
Journal of Observations

Year	Times and Binary Phases ( $\phi$ )
1975	Nov. 11, 0230 UT - Nov. 19, 0800 UT ( $\phi = .33$ ) ( $\phi = .80$ )
1976	Oct. 27, 2000 UT - Oct. 31, 2245 UT ( $\phi = .15$ ) ( $\phi = .88$ )
	Nov. 8, 0745 UT - Nov. 16, 0030 UT ( $\phi = .20$ ) ( $\phi = .57$ )
1977	Oct. 21, 1145 UT - Oct. 31, 0015 UT ( $\phi = .20$ ) ( $\phi = .90$ )
	Nov. 11, 0500 UT - Nov. 17, 0900 UT ( $\phi = .90$ ) ( $\phi = .00$ )

the detector is removed by apodization; and then the effects of fluorescent escape photons, detector quantum efficiency and absorption in overlying material are removed by using the measured properties of the detector obtained during laboratory calibration. The data are analyzed in energy bins of bandwidth approximately one standard deviation (0.424 FWHM) of the energy resolution of the detector. The effects of instrumental gain changes on the resultant spectra (Dennis, et al., 1978) are not significant for sources as strong as Cyg XR-1. During the observations described in this paper, bins 10 keV wide were used between 13 and 123 keV, and bins 30 keV wide above 123 keV. After the completion of this reduction procedure, the resultant incident fluxes derived for adjacent bins may be combined to produce an average intensity in a wider energy bandwidth which is statistically more significant. The incident spectrum so derived

is then compared directly with the intensity predicted by any assumed source mechanism to determine whether any simple set of spectral parameters is consistent with the data.

The raw counting rates observed in the bandwidth 23 to 153 keV during the times listed in Table I are shown in Figure 1. Data are grouped in intervals of 0.55995 days, or a phase interval of one-tenth the period of the HDE 226868 binary system (Bolton 1975). As can be seen by inspection, the apparent brightness of the source in this energy band was significantly lower in 1975 than in 1976 or 1977. Comparison with lower energy proportional counter data taken simultaneously by Holt, et al., (1976, 1978) and Serlemitsos, et al., (quoted in Dolan, et al., 1976) reveals that Cyg XR-1 was in a low state as defined at 3 to 6 keV during all of our observations in 1976 and 1977. In using the terms "high state" and "low state," we shall always refer to the intensity state as observed at lower energies, 3 to 6 keV. A transition from a low to a high state occurred on 1975 Nov. 16, simultaneously with the drop in our 23 to 153 keV counting rate (Dolan, et al., 1977b). After that time, the source was in a high state during our observations in 1975. Hence, we have observed Cyg XR-1 in both its high intensity state and low intensity state, and have also observed it during one transition between states.

Typical spectra taken during the low intensity state are shown in Figure 2. The observed spectra are well represented by a single power law of the form

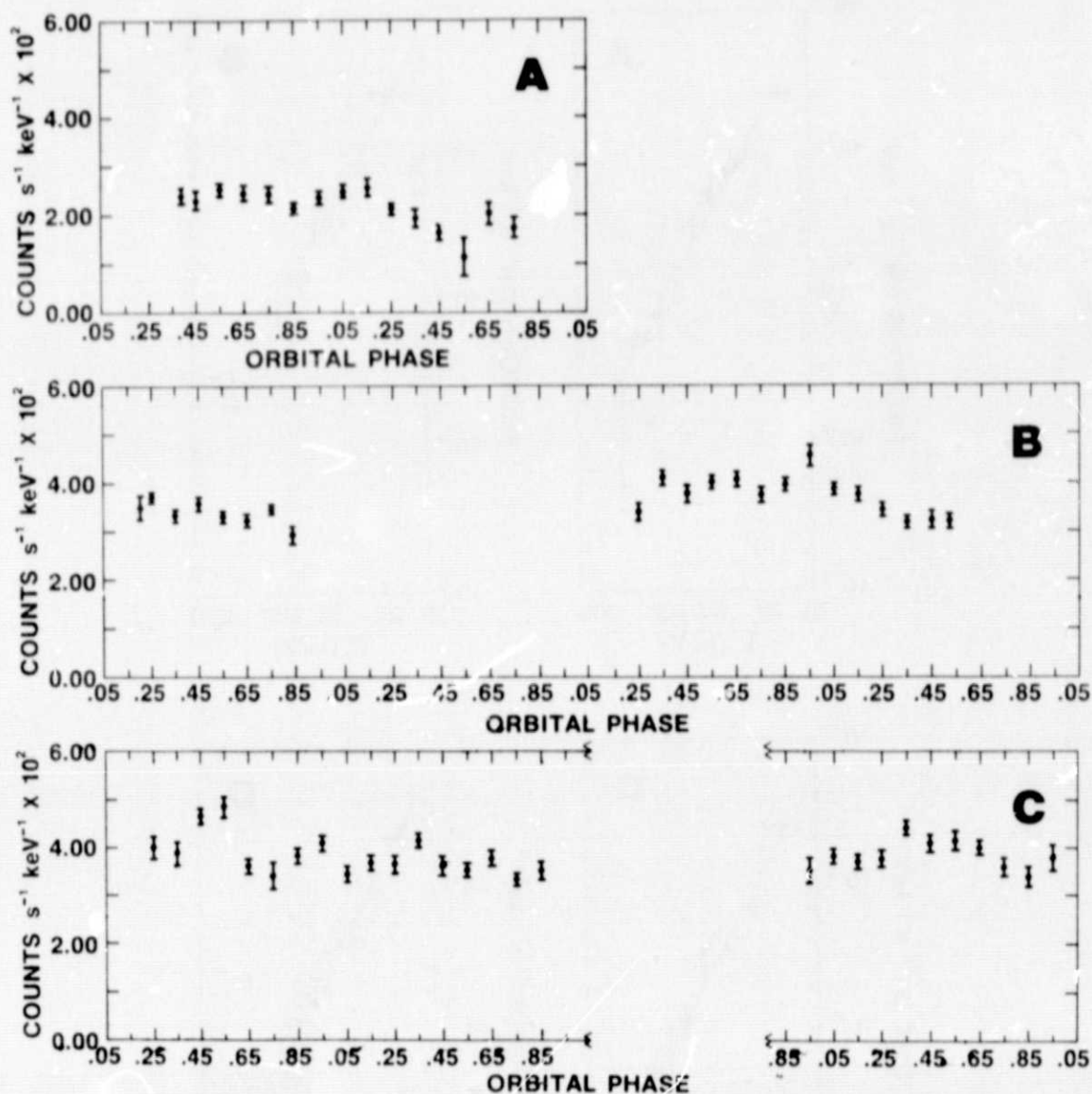


Figure 1. The raw counting rate, in  $\text{counts s}^{-1} \text{ keV}^{-1}$ , observed from Cyg XR-1 in the bandwidth 23 to 153 keV. (A) Data taken in 1975. (B) Data taken in 1976. The two data sets are separated by a gap of 8 days (slightly over one binary period) during which time the spacecraft axis was pointed at Cyg XR-1. (C) Data taken in 1977. Note that the two data sets are separated by a gap of 12 days (two binary periods) during which time spacecraft pointing precluded observations with our instrument.

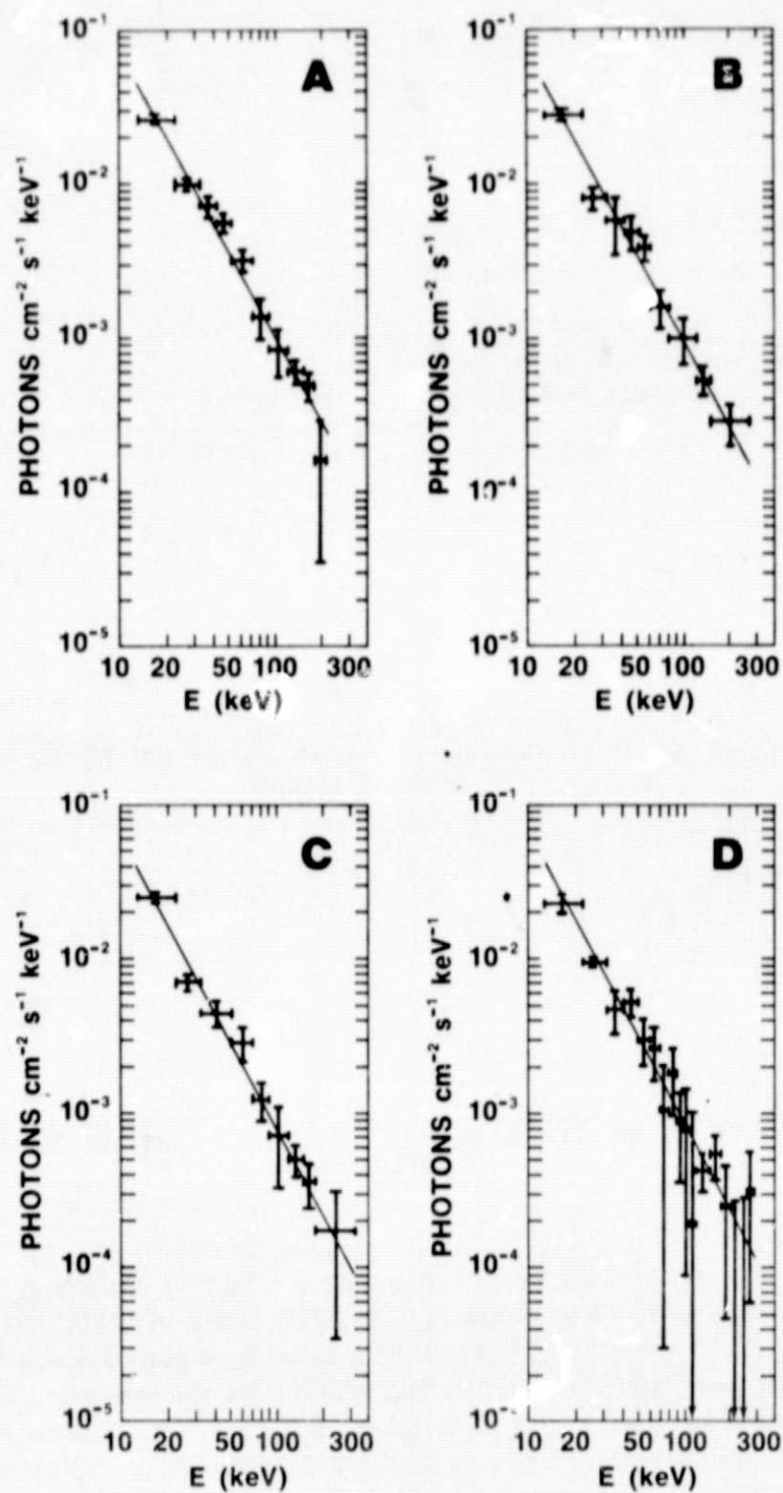


Figure 2.  
(Continued on Next Page)

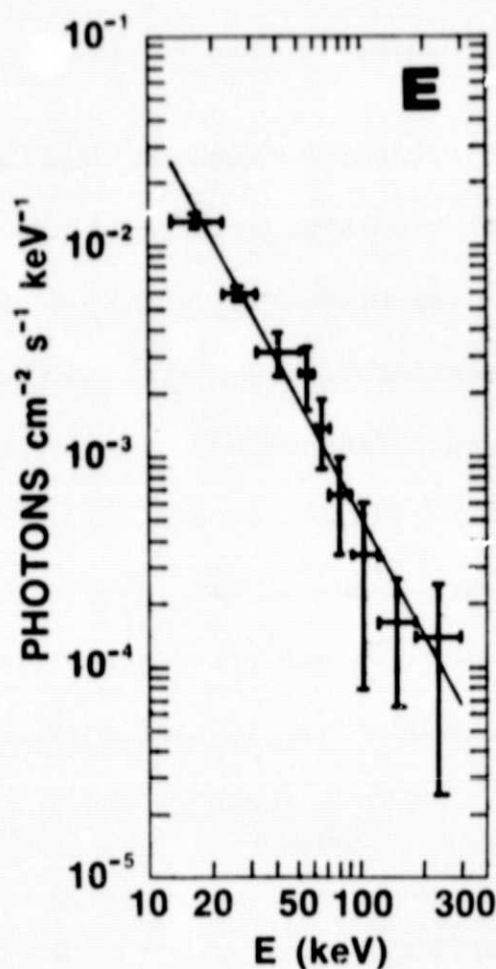


Figure 2. Typical spectra of Cyg XR-1 observed by OSO-8 when the source was in a low state as defined at lower energies. The straight line in each spectrum is the single power law expression which gives an acceptable minimum  $\chi^2$  distribution about the observed intensities. The resultant values of  $\alpha$ , C and E for each spectrum, as defined in Eq. (1) are given in Table II.

- (A) Spectrum observed 1977 Nov. 13, 1050 UT to Nov. 14, 0015 UT ( $\phi = 0.30$  to  $0.40$ ).
- (B) Spectrum observed 1977 Oct. 22, 0115 UT to 1445 UT ( $\phi = 0.30$  to  $0.40$ ).
- (C) Spectrum observed 1976 Nov. 11, 1630 UT to Nov. 12, 0600 UT ( $\phi = 0.80$  to  $0.90$ ).
- (D) Spectrum observed 1976 Nov. 10, 0000 UT to 1330 UT ( $\phi = 0.50$  to  $0.60$ ).
- (E) Spectrum observed 1975 Nov. 14, 2000 UT to Nov. 15, 0930 UT ( $\phi = 0.00$  to  $0.10$ ).



$$dN/dE = C(E/E_0)^{-\alpha} \text{ photons cm}^{-2} \text{ s}^{-1} \text{ keV}^{-1}. \quad (1)$$

Contours of equal  $\chi^2$  in  $(C, \alpha)$  parameter space are elliptical with axes approximately parallel to the  $C$  and  $\alpha$  axes when the energy is expressed in units of  $E_0$ , the weighted mean energy of our total bandwidth. This implies that the uncertainties in  $C$  and  $\alpha$  are independent. Values of  $C$ ,  $\alpha$  and  $E_0$  for each spectrum are given in Table II. The statistical uncertainties quoted in Table II for each spectral representation are 68% ( $\chi^2_{\min} + 2.30$ ) confidence intervals derived from the contours of equal  $\chi^2$  in the two dimensional parameter space (Lampton, et al., 1976). Real variability is seen in the half-day averages of the 23 to 153 keV flux when the source is in a low state (cf. Fig. 1), but these short-term fluctuations

Table II  
Power Law Representations of Observed Spectra,  
 $dN/dE = C (E/E_0)^{-\alpha} \text{ photons cm}^{-2} \text{ s}^{-1} \text{ keV}^{-1}$

Figure	$\alpha$	$C$ ( $10^{-3} \text{ photons cm}^{-2} \text{ s}^{-1} \text{ keV}^{-1}$ )	$E_0$ (keV)
2 (A)	$1.83 \pm 0.09$	$8.69 \pm 0.57$	32.5
2 (B)	$1.89 \pm 0.13$	$7.67 \pm 0.72$	34.3
2 (C)	$1.88 \pm 0.15$	$8.40 \pm 0.73$	29.6
2 (D)	$1.85 \pm 0.15$	$6.86 \pm 0.58$	34.2
2 (E)	$1.87 \pm 0.17$	$6.99 \pm 0.53$	25.8
3	$2.21 \pm 0.27$	$6.80 \pm 0.97$	23.8



do not correlate with any systematic variations in the spectral index,  $\alpha$ , of the power law spectrum representing the observations.

A typical spectrum taken when Cyg XR-1 was in a high state is shown in Figure 3. The line representing the power law which best represents the low state spectrum shown in Figure 2(D) is also plotted in this figure. It is apparent that a high state corresponds to a lower intensity above 20 keV than does a low state. Further, the change in intensity above 20 keV is accompanied by a change in spectral index,  $\alpha$ , in the sense that the low state corresponds to a harder spectrum. The change in intensity in the two different bandwidths is consistent with a spectrum whose shape is always a single power law but which seems to pivot about a point between the two energy ranges (cf. also Tananbaum, *et al.*, 1972; Coe, Engel and Quenby 1976; Matteson, *et al.*, 1976). From the observations of Coe, Engel and Quenby (1976), this pivot point occurs at approximately 7 keV.

If the spectrum in Figure 3 is taken as typical of the high state, and if this spectrum extends unchanged to 0.1 keV (Shapiro, Lightman and Eardley 1976; Eardley and Lightman 1976), then the luminosity of the source between 0.1 and 150 keV is

$$L_x = 4\pi R^2 \int_{0.1}^{150} E(dN/dE) dE = 4\pi R^2 C E_0^\alpha \int_{0.1}^{150} E^{(1-\alpha)} dE, \quad (2)$$

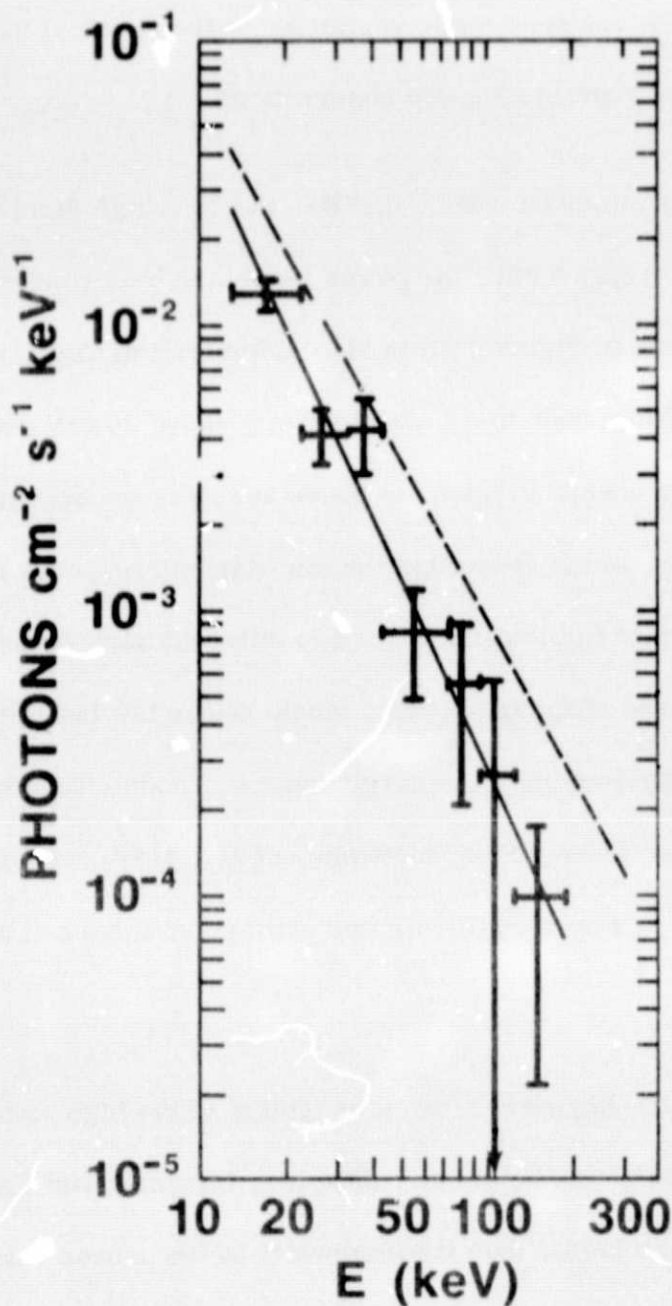


Figure 3. Spectrum of Cyg XR-1 observed 1975 Nov. 17, 0200 UT to 1530 UT ( $\phi = 0.40$  to  $0.50$ ), when the source was in a high state. The values of  $\alpha$ ,  $C$  and  $E_0$  of the power law which best represents the data are given in Table II; the power law is shown in the figure as the full line. The dashed line is the power law which best represents the low state spectrum shown in Figure 2(D).

where  $R$  is the distance to the source. If we adopt 2.5 kpc as the value of  $R$  (Margon, Bowyer and Stone 1973),  $L_x = 5.5 \times 10^{37} \text{ erg s}^{-1}$  in the high state. If the spectrum of the source immediately before the transition, Figure 2(E), is taken as typical of the low state, and if it likewise extends unchanged to lower energies, then  $L_x = 3.3 \times 10^{37} \text{ erg s}^{-1}$  in the low state. The high state is then properly named: it is the higher luminosity state of the system.

The intensity of each individual spectrum we observed, measured over durations of 0.1 in the binary phase of the system, could be well represented by a simple power law (Equation (1)) in the energy range between 20 and 200 keV. The intensity of some of the spectra we observed could also be well represented by a double power law spectrum with an increase in spectral index at higher energies of 0.5 or larger. The break point between the two power laws typically occurred between 40 and 125 keV for different spectra. Since only about one-third of our spectra could be represented by a double power law with a break in  $\alpha$  this large, while all of our spectra could be represented by a single power law expression, we believe that our data provides no independent evidence for the existence of a break point in the spectrum of Cyg XR-1 below an energy of approximately 150 keV.

The transition we observed occurred on 1975 Nov. 16 (cf. Fig. 1(A)). The 23 to 153 keV counting rate decreased by approximately 50%, with the source remaining at a significantly lower counting rate after the transition than before it.

Boldt (1976) distinguishes between 'transitions' and 'transient events.' In transient events, the 3 to 6 keV intensity fluctuates by a large amount from its previous value but returns to its original level within a few binary periods; in transitions, the flux remains at its new level for many binary periods. Because of the restriction on the pointing requirements of the spacecraft, we cannot distinguish between these two possibilities for the event of 1975 Nov. 16 with our data alone. The continuing observations of Holt, et al., (1976), however, clearly reveal the event to have been a true transition.

### III. DISCUSSION

The pivoting behavior discussed above which we observe around transitions in Cyg XR-1 is consistent with models of the system in which the X-ray emission is produced in a two-temperature accretion disk surrounding the secondary component of the binary system (Shapiro, Lightman and Eardley 1976; Eardley and Lightman 1976). In these models, the inner part of the accretion disk, ballooned up by gas pressure, is geometrically thick but optically thin to higher energy X-rays. The high energy radiation, predicted to have a power law spectrum, is produced from the lower energy X-ray or ultraviolet photons by inverse Compton scattering off the relativistic electrons in the inner region of the disk. The lower energy photons being scattered originate in the cooler, outer portions of the disk. Basically, an increase in the lower energy photon flux arriving at the inner region of the disk 'cools off' the electrons by causing them to undergo more inverse Compton collisions. This results in a lower mean energy gained by the photons



per scattering and hence a lower flux of high energy photons. The anti-correlation between the fluxes in the two energy ranges would then be observed as the same type of pivoting of the spectrum which we observe in Cyg XR-1.

According to these two-temperature accretion disk models, the emergent X-ray spectrum is a simple power law in form, dependent upon several reasonable assumptions about the incident "soft" spectrum (Eardley and Lightman 1976). For energies greater than approximately 150 keV (because of relativistic effects), the emergent spectrum falls below the extrapolated power law, approximating a decreasing exponential in form. This change in spectral form may occur at a lower energy,  $kT_e$ , where  $T_e$  is the electron temperature in the scattering region of the inner disk, if  $kT_e$  is less than 150 keV. The hard X-ray spectra we observe from Cyg XR-1 are well represented by the power-law form predicted by this model. Our observations indicate no decrease in the observed fluxes below that predicted by a single power law which best represents the data up to an energy of approximately 150 keV in either state. Such a change to an exponentially decreasing spectrum at 150 keV (cf. Haymes, et al., 1968; Coe, Engle and Quenby 1976; Coe 1976) would be consistent with our highest energy data points, however. Observations with a detector providing spectral data at energies of 200 keV and above having better statistical accuracy are required to determine whether this transition between spectral forms occurs. A lack of such a change in spectral shape occurring before 200 keV would be a real discrepancy between the two-temperature accretion disk models and the observations. Our

observations by themselves reveal nothing about the origin or the nature of the source of lower-energy photons required by the models.

Transitions in Cyg XR-1 are observed to occur at irregular intervals, but seem to occupy much the same duration, about one day, regardless of the direction of the transition or the interval since the last transition (cf. the references cited in Table III). A list of all observed transitions between intensity states in the source is given in Table III. We note that not only the transition we observed but also seven of the nine other reported transitions commenced near periastron, which occurs at phase 0.18 (Bolton 1975). The two reported events which did not commence near periastron (cf. Table III) are probably not true transitions as defined at the end of Section II, above.

It is reasonable to assume that transitions in the luminosity of Cyg XR-1 are linked to variations in the mass transfer rate from the primary to the accretion disk surrounding the secondary. Alme and Wilson (1976) have proposed a model of the system in which matter is transferred primarily by radiation-driven density waves generated in the atmosphere of the primary, which fills only about 85% of the volume of its Roche Lobe. In such a model having the orbital eccentricity ( $e = 0.06$ ) (Bolton 1975) and period of the HDE 226868 system, nearly all the mass is transferred in an interval approximately 1 day long near periastron. As pointed out by Alme and Wilson, the period between mass transfer 'pulses' is not critically phase locked, and the period between pulses is small compared



Table III  
Transitions in Cygnus XR-1

Date	Transition	Binary Phase at Start	Note	Reference
1971 Mar. 30	high to low	$0.68 < \phi < 1.57$		Tananbaum, <u>et al.</u> , 1972
1975 Apr. 22	low to high	0.15		Holt, <u>et al.</u> , 1976
1975 May 3	low to high	$0.0 < \phi < 0.11$	A	Gursky, <u>et al.</u> , 1975
1975 May 9	high to low	0.17		Sanford, <u>et al.</u> , 1975
1975 June 2	low to high	0.67	B	Sheffer, <u>et al.</u> , 1977
1975 Sept. 6-8	low to high	$0.5 < \phi < 0.7$	C	Holt, <u>et al.</u> , 1976
1975 Oct. 29-30	low to high	0.08	D	Walker, <u>et al.</u> , 1976
1975 Nov. 4-5	low to high	0.15	D	Grindlay, <u>et al.</u> , 1975; Holt, <u>et al.</u> , 1976
1975 Nov. 16	low to high	0.15		Dolan, <u>et al.</u> , 1976; Holt, <u>et al.</u> , 1976
1976 Feb. 19	high to low	0.17		Kaluzienski, <u>et al.</u> , 1976; Holt, <u>et al.</u> , 1976

Notes:

- A. May be a transient event rather than a transition (cf. Holt, et al., 1976).
- B. Probably not a transition: referred to in Sheffer, et al., 1977 as an emersion from a short intensity dip caused by absorption in a gas stream crossing the line of sight (cf. also Holt, et al., 1976).
- C. Probably not a transition but a temporary increase in the 3 to 6 keV intensity of the low state (cf. Holt, et al., 1976).
- D. May be a connected series of transient events (cf. Holt, et al., 1976).

to the characteristic disk transfer time. Hence, variations in the X-ray emission at this period would be difficult to detect if approximately the same amount of mass were transferred every pulse. If the primary suddenly and drastically changed the amount of matter it transferred per pulse, however, the disk might then be expected to show a changed luminosity commencing near periastron. A large increase in mass transferred per pulse would increase the low energy photon flux in the outer regions of the disk. The high energy flux would then follow in an anti-correlated fashion, as discussed above. The difference between transitions and transient events would then be related to whether the mass transferred in succeeding pulses was maintained at its new value or returned to its previous level.

A sudden change in the amount of matter transferred per pulse may be related to the fundamental rotation properties of the free modes of oscillation of the primary (Wolff and Kondo 1978). According to the theory outlined by Wolff (1974), the nondegenerate star is pulsating in a broad array of g-modes, global in scale and lacking spherical symmetry. Under slow rotation and sufficient non-linear coupling, the g-modes can combine to form a much smaller set of non-linear modes grossly departing from azimuthal symmetry. As the main antinodes of the non-linear modes rotate past each other, the oscillatory power density at these locations is temporarily enhanced. An increased amount of mass may be transferred whenever the main antinodes are effectively aligned with the sub-secondary point on the surface of the primary. On the Sun, effective alignments of g-modes typically last about one-half year (Wolff 1976); for HDE

226868, the time scale of effective alignments may be shorter because of its more rapid rotation. Because of the large number of g-modes excited in the primary star, many different periods between successive effective alignments of different sets of g-modes are possible, some operating over a timescale of years. Hence, if this mechanism is the cause of luminosity variations in Cyg XR-1 by means of occasionally enhancing the mass transfer rate in the system, the periodicity in such enhancements would be difficult to detect over an observational duration as short as five years, especially since the mechanism requires the occurrence of the aligned antinodes at a specific location on the stellar surface, the sub-secondary point. Instead, transitions would appear to occur at random intervals, as they do in Table III. If the effective alignment of certain main antinodes were to last only one binary period or less at the sub-secondary point on the primary, the increased mass transfer would exist for only one pulse at periastron and produce a transient event rather than a transition.

Observations of Cyg XR-1 should be continued to see whether the correlation of commencement time with phase near periastron is borne out in future transitions and whether any pattern appears in the times of occurrence of transitions and transient events.

We thank Kate Bauer for assistance in the analysis of the data, OSO Project Scientist Roger J. Thomas for scheduling the observations of the source and the personnel of Comtech, Inc., Edwin P. Cutler in particular, for their participation in the reduction of the data.

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