Original Research Article

Bibliometric Analysis on Global Comparative Literature Research

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze the research trend and hotspots in the field of comparative literature by using the method of bibliometrics. The data is derived from the Web of Science Core Collection Database. The visualization software VOSViewer is utilized to draw keyword co-occurrence knowledge graph. R programming language is employed to analyze the quantity of publications, core journals, highly cited papers, the most contributing authors, and keyword word cloud. The results indicate that ever since 1975, this study field has entered a period of rapid development; top journals with most publications are mainly from France, the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada. Most of the highly cited articles have emerged in the recent two decades, and quite a few of them inherit the academic tradition of adopting a geographic perspective. The keyword word cloud and the keyword co-ocurrence knowledge mapping reveal that comparative literature study is shifting its focus from literary history and intertextuality to identity, culture, literary theory and world literature. The recent reserch hotspots in this field are mainly identity, culture, world literature, literary theory, Latin American literature, appropriation, genre, theatre, ethics and digital humanities, etc.
Keywords: Comparative Literature, Bibliometric Analysis, Knowledge Mapping, VOSViewer, Research Trend, Research Hotspots.

I. INTRODUCTION

Due to the rapid development of globalization, comparative literature study has gained considerable academic attention. Throughout the history of comparative literature study, it is often carried out based on the researcher's native literature and culture, and there is a lack of related study from a global perspective. As to the research method, qualitative analysis exceeds far beyond quantitative studies. Even though a few quantitative studies have emerged recently, they are still based on the literary works from certain geographical locations or about particular critical works. For example, Domínguez focused on the bibliometric analysis of two American and Spanish journals on comparative literature to assess the impact of geopolitics on comparative literature studies (Domínguez C, 2021). Indeed, case studies are the important origin and basis for comparative literature research. However, there is also a need for the overall assessment of research progress from a global bibliometric perspective.

Bibliometrics is a popular interdisciplinary scientific method that analyzes bibliographic data through mathematical and statistical methods (Broadus, 1987). It analyzes and evaluates research quality, quantity and interest, and represents the current status and development of a particular academic field. It has been widely used in the analysis of specific information on publications, such as co-citations and co-occurence of keywords. By adopting a bibliometric method, this study discusses the characteristics of core journals, highly cited articles, most contributing authors, and high frequency keywords in the field of comparative literature. VOSViewer and R programming language are used for data visualization and the analysis of research trend and hotspots in this field.

II. DATA SOURCES AND RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Data sources

In order to incorporate high-impact papers and researches in this study field as much as possible, this study selects the Web of Science Core Collection Database, the world's largest comprehensive academic information resource platform covering the most disciplines, as the source of data. The most influential academic journals in various fields are highly representative and authoritative.

The publications are collected from this database. The search strategy is used as TS (Topic

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Search) = "comparative literature". The index time range is for all years. The search time is September 16, 2022. A total of 2,148 search results are retrieved, and with duplications removed, finally 2,133 related articles are obtained for this study.

2.2 Analytical method

This research uses software VOSviewer and R programming language as bibliographic data processing tools to analyze the retrieved articles mentioned above. VOSviewer is an open access knowledge graph software developed by Van Eck and Waltman in 2009 (Van Eck N J *et al*, 2010). It can perform clustering analysis on the basis of constructing a co-occurrence matrix of literature keywords, and obtain a clustering mapping, so as to display different clustering topics in a visual way. The R package "bibliometrix" is employed to perform the topic trend figure, word cloud, and statistical analysis of publications (Aria M, 2017).

Based on the information about keywords co-occurrence mapping, highly cited papers, topic trend and word cloud of high frequency keywords, this study obtains the research hotspots and development trend in the field of comparative literature.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
3.1 Analysis of the year and number of publications

In the Web of Science Core Collection Database, the earliest research literature in the field of comparative literature can be traced back to 1909 (Leach H G, 1909). From 1909 to 1975, the number of articles almost stayed stable at a very low level. But ever since 1975, the number of publications has increased dramatically (Figure 1), with 2019 being the year of most publications (n=170) and the annual growth rate is 3.86%. As the search date is September 16, 2022, so the data for the year of 2022 is not complete, only covering the time period from January to September 16.
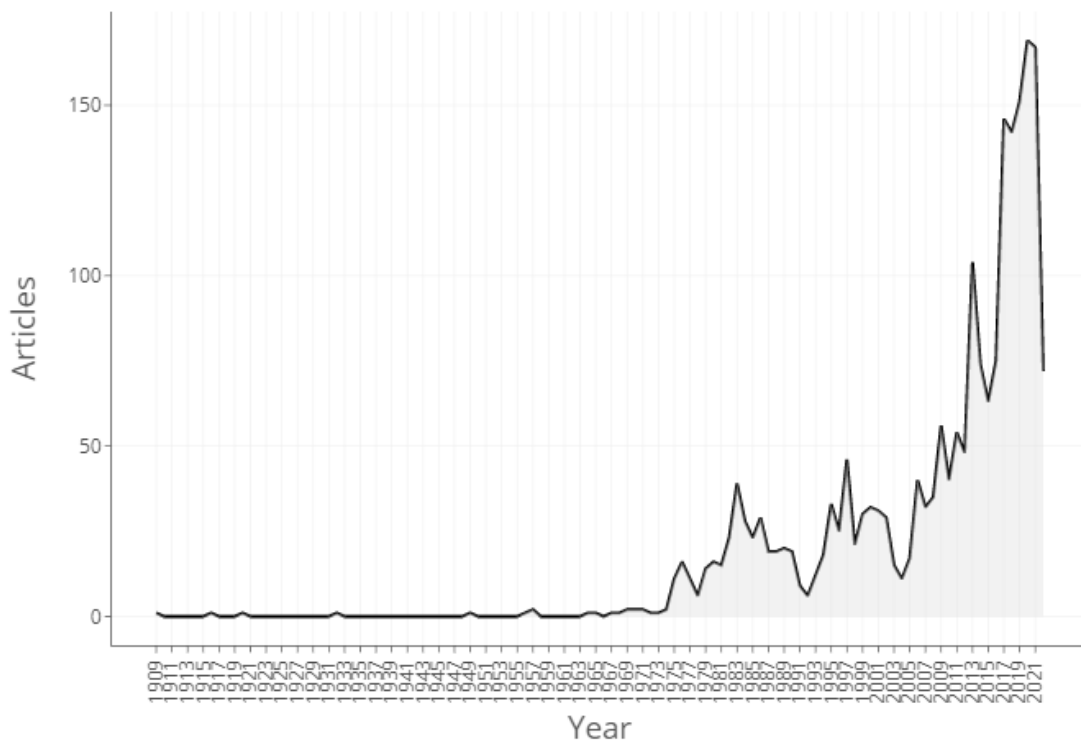

Figure 1: Annual Publications in the Field of Comparative Literature

3.2 Analysis of the core journals

A total of 2,133 articles in the dataset are published in 922 journals, among which 672 journals have only one article. As shown in Table 1, the top ten journals in terms of the number of publications account for 27.8% of the total, showing the 80/20 rule, or the pareto principle (Yang Y *et al*, 2020), that is, 20% of the journals cover 80% of the total publications.

Interestingly, the top journal *RLC-Revue De Litterature Comparee* with the most publications features a lower impact factor of 0.36 than the following four journals of *Neohelicon* (0.79), *Comparative Literature Studies* (0.84), *CLCWeb-Comparative Literature and Culture* (0.61), and *Arcadia* (0.73); while *Comparative Literature*, which ranks the eighth in terms of the number of publications, features the highest impact factor of 1.5.
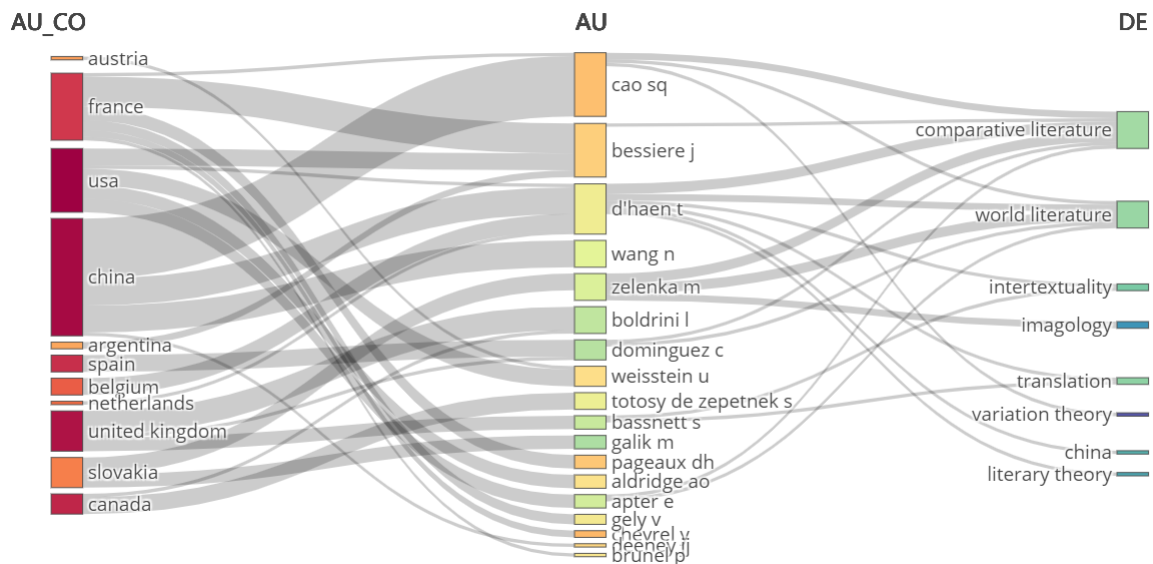
Table 1: Top 10 Journals Publishing Most Papers on Comparative Literature

No	Sources	Impact Factor (2021)	Articles
1	*RLC-Revue De Litterature Comparee*	0.36	137
2	*Neohelicon*	0.79	84
3	*Comparative Literature Studies*	0.84	64
4	*CLCWeb-Comparative Literature and Culture*	0.61	57
5	*Arcadia*	0.73	54
6	*Canadian Review of Comparative Literature-Revue Canadienne De Litterature Comparee*	0.37	54
7	*Foreign Literature Studies*	-	50
8	*Comparative Literature*	1.5	34
9	*Primerjalna Knjizevnost*	0.68	34
10	*Tamkang Review*	-	30

3.3 Analysis of the most contributing authors and countries

Figure 2 represents the top 20 authors with most publications in the research field of comparative literature, combining authors' nationalities and the keywords in their articles. It can be seen that the most contributing authors are mainly from China, the United States, France, the United Kingdom, and Canada. The most frequent keywords in their publications include world literature, comparative literature, translation, intertexulity, and so on.

AU_CO: Author Country; AU: Author; DE: Author's Keywords
Figure 2: Top 20 Authors with the Most Publications, Their Nationalities, and Keywords
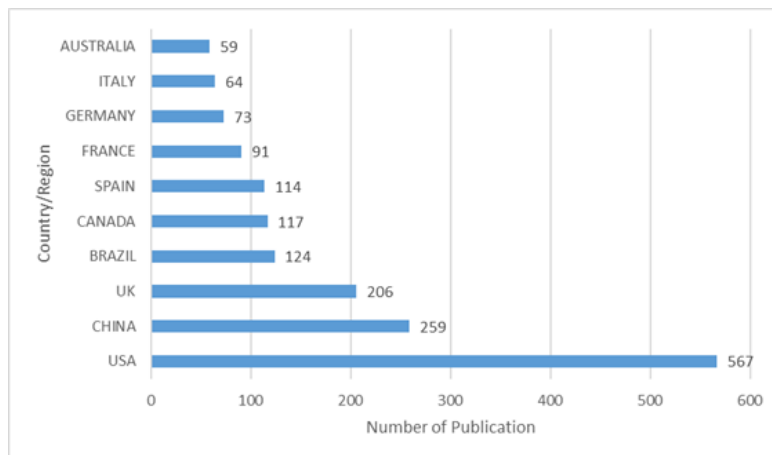

Figure 3: Top 10 Countries with Most Publications

Figure 3 displays the top 10 countries with most publications in the field of comparative literature. It can be seen the United States is the leading country with the most publications (567 articles), followed by China (259 articles), and the United Kingdom (206 articles). Most of the studies have been carried out in developed countries mainly located in Europe and America; only China and Brazil are developing countries. There is a certain sort of geographical unevenness in this study field.

3.4 Analysis of highly cited articles

Table 2 displays the top 15 frequently cited articles in the field of comparative literature, which are the core articles with profound influence. The publication years of all the core articles are after 2003. Combined with the "Annual Publications" in Figure 1, Table 2 indicates that the research field has entered a period of rapid development since 2003. It also reflects that in recent 20 years, quite a few comparative literature studies are still based on literature of certain countries or regions, for example, several articles dig into this research field from European, Arabic, British or Chinese perspective.

Table 2: Top 15 Highly cited Articles in the Field of Comparative Literature

Author	Title	TC[a]	TC/Y[b]	Publication Year	Source
Apter, E	Global translation: The "Invention" of comparative literature. Istanbul, 1933.	59	2.95	2003	Critical Inquiry
Marcus, S	Same difference? Transnationalism, comparative literature, and Victorian Studies	31	1.55	2003	Victorian Studies
Bassnett, S	Reflections on comparative literature in the twenty-first century	23	1.35	2006	Comparative Critical Studies
Boldrini, L	Comparative literature in the twenty-first century: a view from Europe and the UK	15	0.75	2006	Comparative Critical Studies
Damrosch, D	Comparative literature? (Diversity through globalization)	15	0.6	2003	PMLA-Publications of the Mordern Language Association of America
Wang, M	Comparative Literature in Chinese: A Survey of books published 2000-2013	13	1.3	2013	CLCWEB-Comparative Literature and Culture
Ghazoul, FJ	Comparative Literature in the Arab World	12	0.71	2006	Comparative Critical Studies
Culler, J	Whither Comparative Literature	11	0.65	2006	Comparative Critical Studies
Kadir, D	Comparative literature in a world become Tlon	11	0.65	2006	Comparative Critical Studies
Dominguez, C	Literary geography and comparative literature	10	0.83	2011	CLCWEB-Comparative Literature and Culture
D'Haen, T	Antique lands, new world? Comparative literature, intertextuality, translation	8	0.5	2007	Forum for Modern Language Studies
During, S	Comparative literature	8	0.42	2004	ELH
Brennan, T	Edward Said and comparative literature	8	0.42	2004	Journal of palestine Studies
Slaughter, J R	Locations of comparison	7	1.4	2018	Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry
Weninger, R	Comparative literature at a crossroad? An introduction	6	0.35	2006	Comparative Critical Studies

a: Total Citations; b: Total Citations per year

3.5 Analysis of keywords word cloud and research hotspots

This research uses the R programming language to make statistical analysis of the authors' keywords in the articles and creates the high-frequency keyword word cloud (Figure 4). In Figure 4, the text size is related to the frequency of keyword. The main keywords in terms of frequency include world literature, translation, literature, intertextuality, cultural studies, globalization, China, literary theory, etc.

Figure 5 demonstrates the dynamic topic trend of comparative literature. It can be seen that even though Shakespeare studies and literary history studies have constantly remained important themes, however, the up to date topics are identity studies, appropriation, cultural studies and Latin American literature studies. It helps to understand the evolution of comparative literature study hotspots, shifting its focus from literary history, literary studies and intertextuality to identity, culture, Latin America literature, literary theory and world literature.
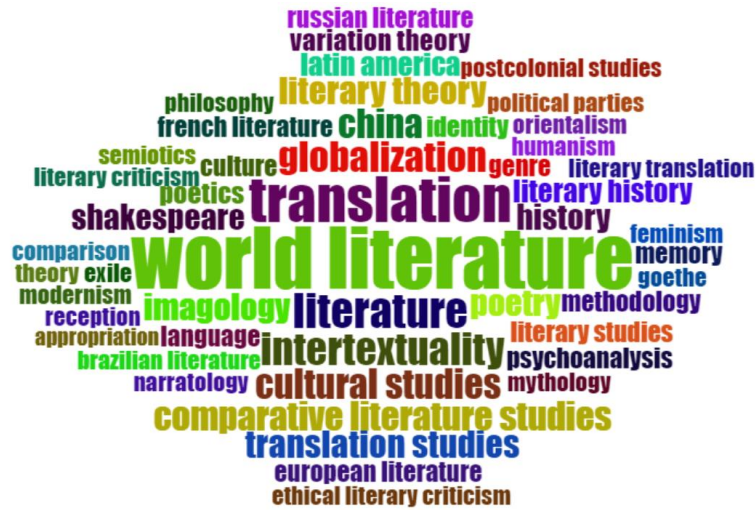
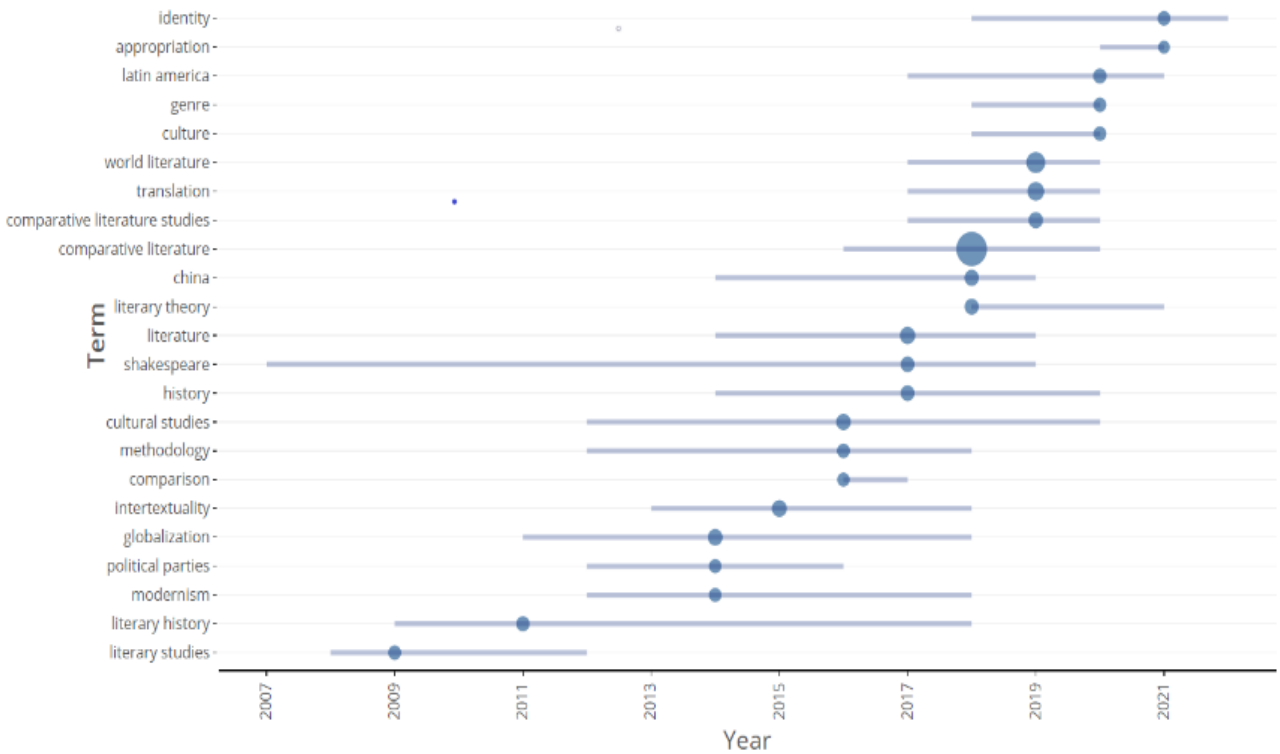**Figure 4: Keyword Word Cloud in the Field of Comparative Literature**

Figure 5: Topic Trend of Comparative Literature Study

This research makes use of VOSViewer software to draw the co-occurrence knowledge mapping of high-frequency keywords with time parameter concerned (Figure 6). In Figure 6, each node represents a keyword. The larger nodes represent higher frequency of the keywords. The thickness of the line is related to the frequency of the co-occurrence of two keywords. The color of the node indicates the time when the keyword appears in the article. The darker the color is, the earlier the keyword appears, and the lighter the color is, the later the keyword emerges. From Figure 6, it can be seen that the research hotspots in the field of comparative literature in recent years are identity, culture, world literature, literary theory, Latin American literature, appropriation, genre, theatre, ethics and digital humanities, etc.
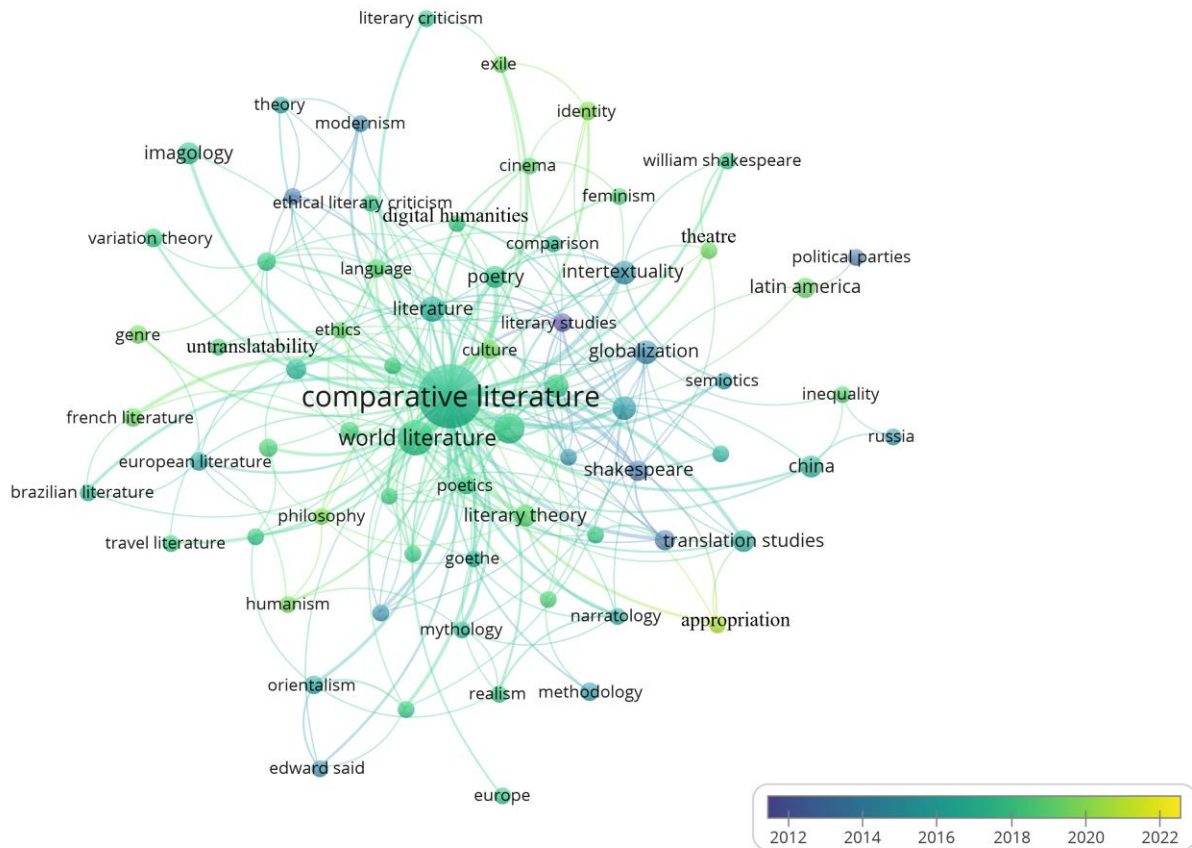
Figure 6: Co-occurrence Mapping of High-frequency Keywords

IV. CONCLUSION

This research uses the R Programming language and knowledge graph software VOSviewer to conduct visualization and bibliometric analysis of publications in the field of comparative literature. The data is retrieved from the Web of Science Core Collection Database. Main analysis index includes the temporal distribution and quantity of publications, core journals, most contributing authors and countries, highly cited papers, keyword word cloud and keyword co-occurrence network.

It concludes that ever since 1975, this study field has entered a period of rapid development. Not only does the number of publications rises dramatically, their academic impact also expands prominently, which indicates a promising development trend. The top journals with most published articles are mainly from France, the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada. The United States, China, and the United Kingdom are the top three countries in terms of the number of publications. And the most contributing authors are mainly from these countries, too. It indicates that there is a geographical imbalance in the field of comparative literature. Besides, most of the highly cited articles have emerged in the recent two decades, and researches on literature from certain geographic locations remain the mainsteam. A global and interdisciplinary perspective has yet to form.

The keyword word cloud and the keyword co-ocurrence knowledge mapping reflect that comparative literature study is shifting its focus from literary history, literary studies and intertextuality to identity, culture, literary theory and world literature. The research hotspots in this field are identity, culture, world literature, literary theory, Latin American literature, appropriation, genre, theatre, ethics and digital humanities, etc. This study provides valuabe information and insight on the research trend and hotspots of comparative literature. It may guide the further studies in the following aspects:

With world literature emerging as a hotspot in this study field, researchers should try to break through the limitations of literature case analysis and national literature research, and adopt a global perspective. The research of any discipline has an exploration progress from the individual to the collective, from the specific to the general, and from the micro to the macro. In this process, single specific microscopic research is the foundation. However, the microscopic comparative literature research which is often based on national or regional literature should be aware of its position and influence in the macroscopic world literature. Macroscopic research explores the globalization and integration of literary phenomenon and trends arising from the extensive cultural connections among countries around the world (Zhang Y, 2019). In short,

while studying the literary phenomenon of literature of different countries and nationalities, it is necessary to have the vision of world literature, and to seek the deep and universal principles and trend of literature.

Besides, cross-border academic communication between researchers is indispensable in global comparative literature studies. From the authors and titles of highly cited papers shown in Table 2, it can be seen that there is a lack of cross-regional or cross-border collaborative studies among authors. Research on global comparative literature needs to be carried out in the cultural context with more dynamic academic exchanges.

As to the case studies based on national or regional literature, researchers may take an interdisciplinary approach. It can involve such disciplines as linguistics, anthropology, ethnology, philosophy, etc. Comparative literature is not only a discipline about literature, but also a discipline about culture. It is necessary to integrate it with other disciplines and genres, such as the cultural studies of painting, music, film and theatre. (Lu W, 1982) As is shown in Figure 6, cultural studies, genre, and theatre are the hotspots in current comparative literature research. Take theatre as an example, researchers may pay attention to the translation, adaptation, and performance of dramatic works as well as their influence on literature and culture. They may also adopt the theory of Mesologie, audience response theory, and performance theory to examine the travel of dramatic literature in the world.

Digital humanism is also a hot spot in the field of comparative literature research. Although literature research has always played a role in cultivating humanistic atmosphere. But in today's digital world, technological evolution has provided considerable new subjects for literary creation and research. This may promote the study of comparative literature as an important bearer of the new humanistic spirit, which maintains the symbiosis of different cultures. Thus, comparative literature study is endowed with unprecedented significance.

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