

From the Classroom to the Bookshelf

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WHITE



TERROR

THE HORROR FILM FROM
OBAMA TO TRUMP

Origin Story...

NIGHTMARES IN RED, WHITE, AND BLUE

Horror, Monsters, & Historical Trauma



"The monstrous body is pure culture. A construct and a projection, the monster exists only to be read: the *monstrum* is etymologically "that which reveals," "that which warns," a glyph that seeks a hierophant."

~Jeffrey Jerome Cohen
on Monster Culture







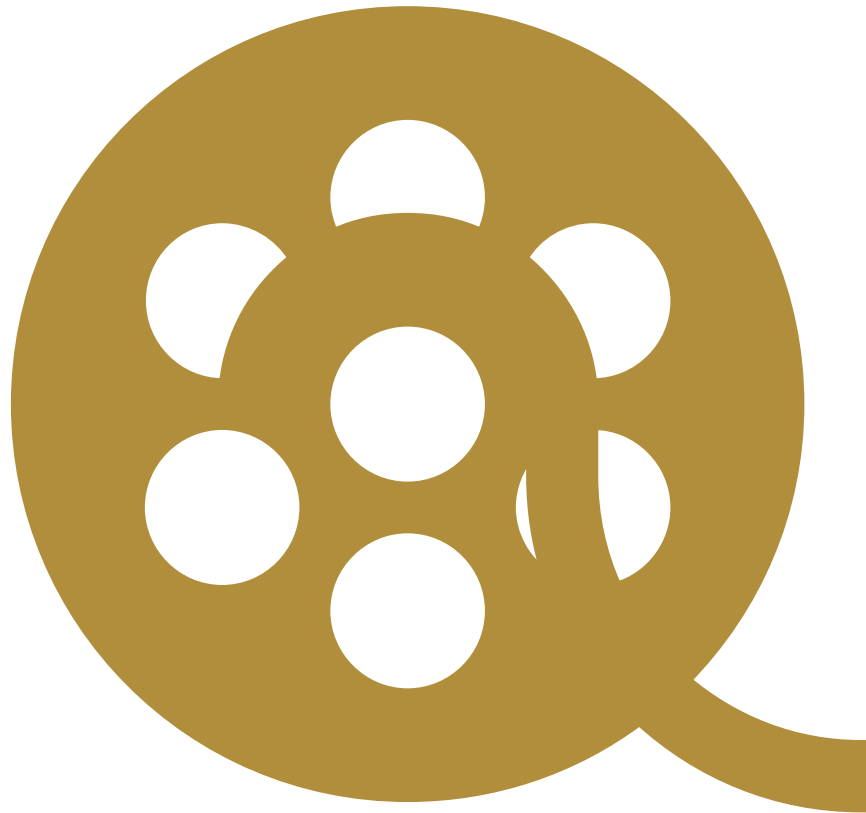




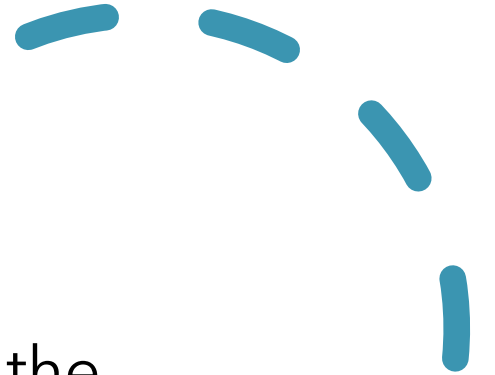
Historicizing the Present



Haunted Houses



How do we demonstrate the relevance of haunted house films, and, moreover, are there other cycles of note?



Methods

Tracking patterns across contemporary horror (1980-the present).

What constitutes "horror"?

- IMDB genre tags
- US or US co-production
- Minimum of \$1 million in box office

Action
Comedy
Creepy Kiddos
ESP
Ghost--No House
Gorno/Body Horror
Haunted House
Home Invasion
International
International Remake
Meta
Monsters
Occult
Possession/Exorcism
Psychological
Remake
Rural
SCI-FI
Serial Killer
Slasher
Stalker
Technology
Urban
Vampires
Virus
Werewolves
Zombies



Methods

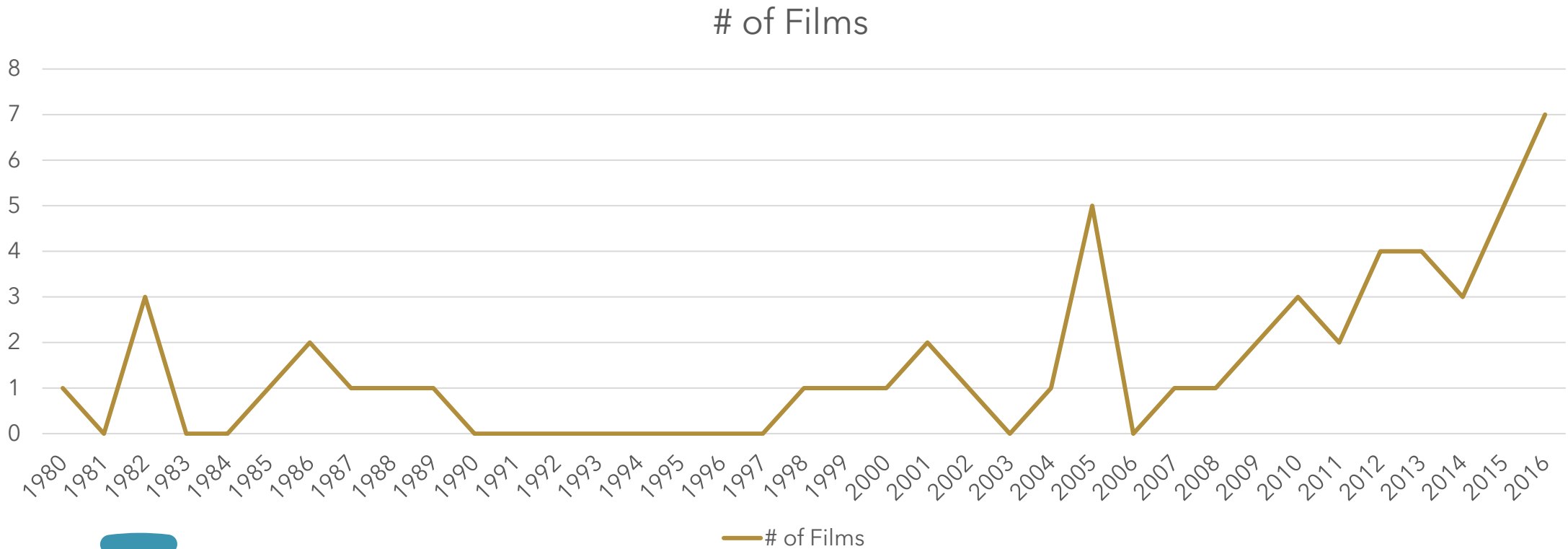
Sort the films into a range of narrative, iconographic, or other categories...

Dominant Cycles of the Obama Era

Haunted Houses

31 produced between 2008 and 2016, representing 21% of U.S. horror in this period.

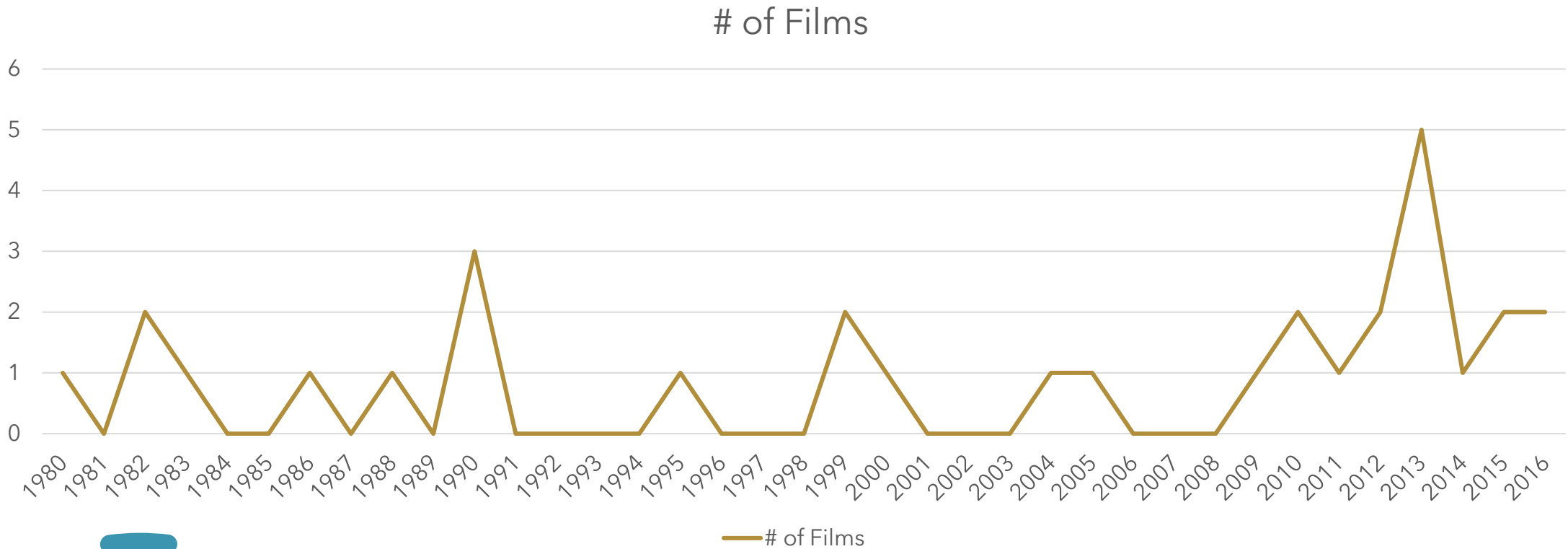
141% increase from previous 8 years



Dominant Cycles of the Obama Era

Possessions & Exorcisms

16 produced between 2008 and 2016, representing 11% of U.S. horror in this period
357% increase from previous 8 years

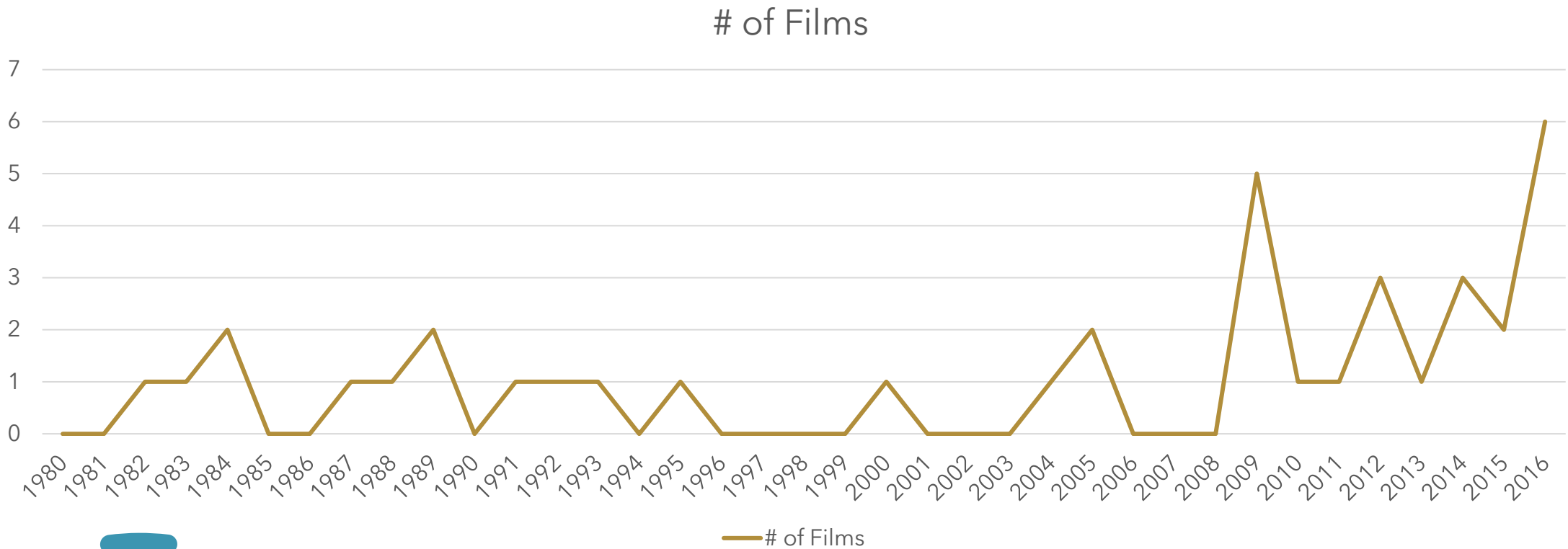


Dominant Cycles of the Obama Era

Creepy Kiddos

22 produced between 2008 and 2016, representing 15% of U.S. horror in this period

371% increase from previous 8 years

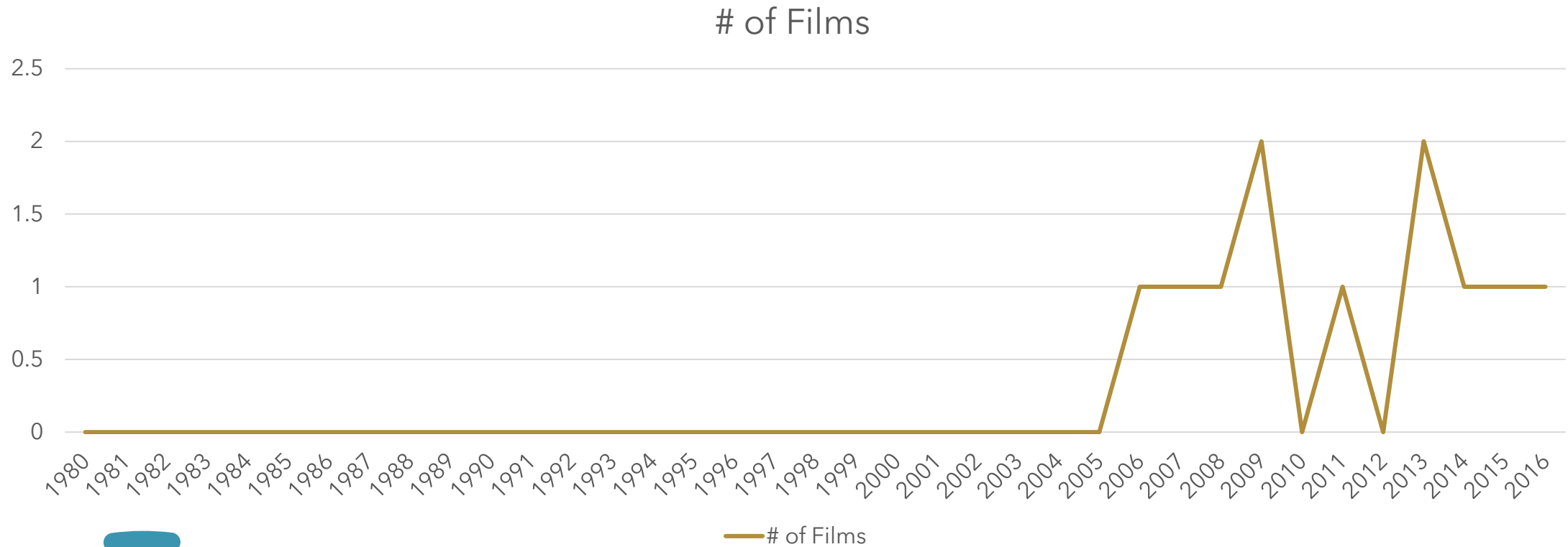


Dominant Cycles of the Obama Era

Home Invasion

9 produced between 2008 and 2016, representing 6% of U.S. horror in this period.

285% increase from previous 8 years



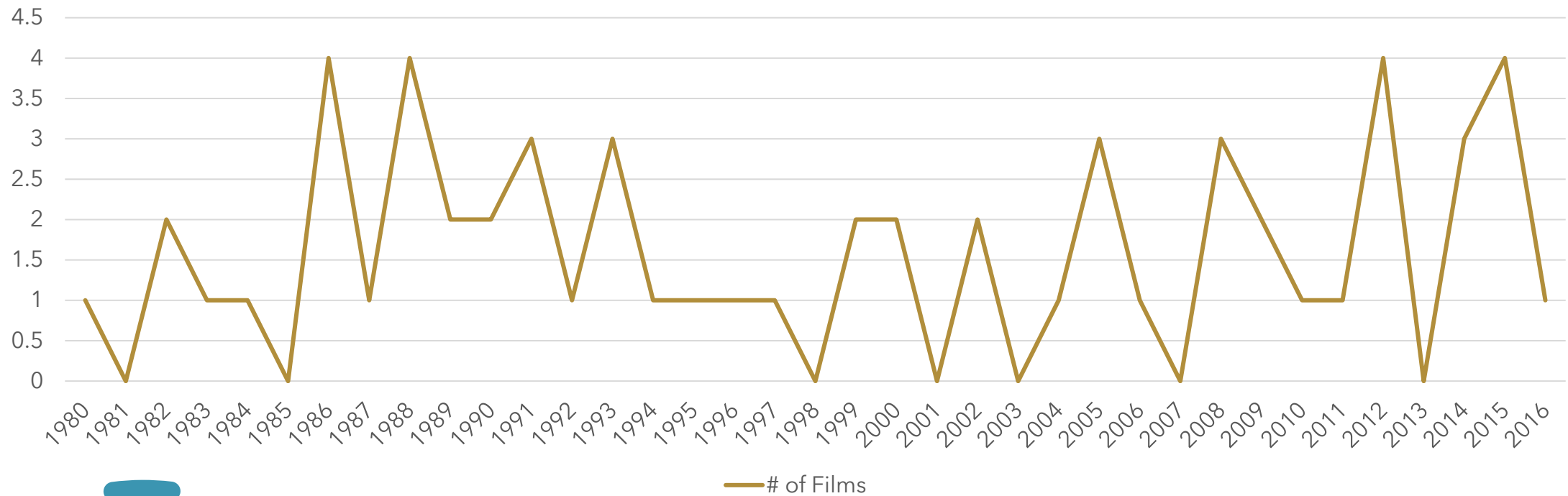
Dominant Cycles of the Obama Era

Technological Horrors

19 produced between 2008 and 2016, representing 12% of U.S. horror in this period

80% increase from previous 8 years

of Films

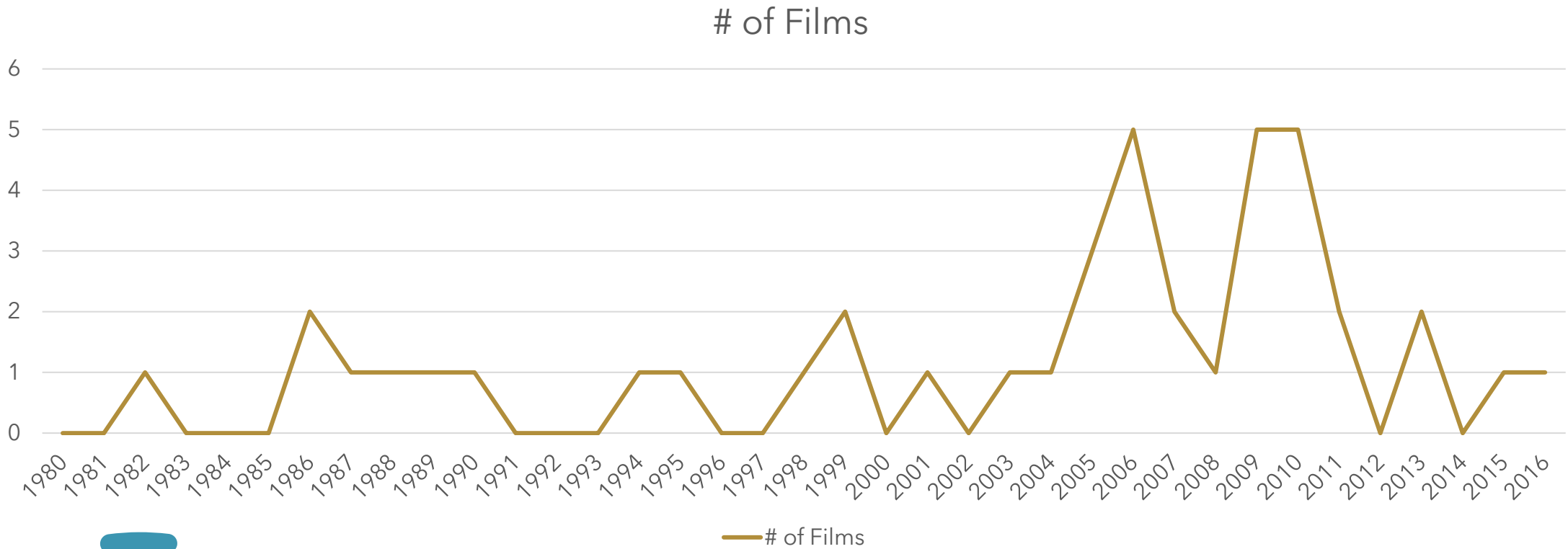


Dominant Cycles of the Obama Era

Domestic Remakes

17 produced between 2008 and 2016, representing 11% of U.S. horror in this period

12% increase from previous 8 years



Historical Traumas

Haunted Houses

Home Invasions

Possessions/Exorcisms

Creepy Kiddos

Technological Horrors

Domestic Remakes

There are clear connections between haunted houses, home invasions, and the housing market crash, but what are the larger cultural contexts unifying these cycles?



WHITENESS

Haunted Houses and Whiteness




Not just “housing” that is in crisis, but the ability of the white middle class to use home ownership to maintain economic and cultural privileges.

In horror storytelling: economically insecure white families poised to lose historical privileges.

Other Cycles & Whiteness

Possession/Exorcism: White men besieged by the culture who turn to rigid traditions to maintain authority over women and children.

Creepy Kiddos: White women with broken families who are tormented by demonic and/or sociopathic children that they cannot control.



Other Cycles & Whiteness

Technological Horrors: White families who think that surveillance culture will save them from nefarious threats; instead, it only reveals horrors.


Domestic Remakes: White-centric horror films which insist that the present is far worse than the past.

Whiteness & Horror History

Across history, horror has also addressed historical traumas through the lens of whiteness...

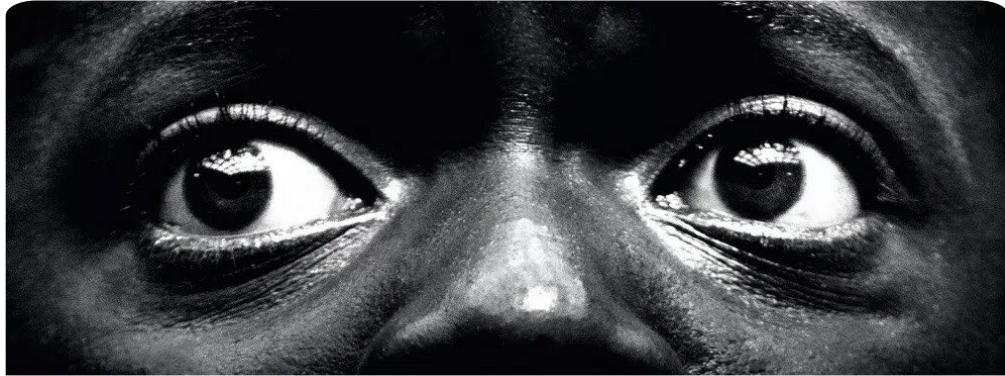
- The Great Depression & Racial Violence
- The Atomic Bomb & Foreign Contamination
- Vietnam and the White Family
- Gorno and international entanglements





White Anxiety as National Trauma

The real trauma that we are grappling
with is white anxiety.



GET OUT

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY JORDAN PEELE

Horror of the Trump Era and Jordan Peele

- Have things changed?
- Horror & Privilege