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The Spectacular Design of First-person Shooters:

Remediating Cinematic Spectacle in *Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare* and *Battlefield 4*

Håvard Vibeto

The convergence between the film and video game industries has been an ongoing project since the 1980s. Admittedly, this endeavor has not always been a successful one in terms of financial earnings and review scores, let alone when it comes to artistic and aesthetic aspects.¹ Nevertheless, this continuing convergence has had a profound influence on the evolution of video game aesthetics, as games draw on audiovisual strategies known from the older medium. In particular, I will suggest in this chapter, the first-person shooter (FPS) has tapped into the audiovisual spectacle characteristic of the Hollywood blockbuster, recreating spectacular, awe-inspiring moments within the interactive environment of video games. Accordingly, this chapter sets out to discuss two FPS games, *Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare* (Sledgehammer, 2014) and *Battlefield 4* (Digital Illusions CE, 2013). I will explore the indebtedness of these video games' audiovisual effects to the spectacle characteristic of blockbuster cinema and how audiovisual spectacle affects the ludic qualities of these games.

To be sure, triple-A FPS titles like *Advanced Warfare* and *Battlefield 4* set new benchmarks for audiovisual qualities in games, particularly through the use of excessive visuals and amplified sounds. These audiovisual spectacles have reached a point where triple-A video games perhaps even surpass the spectacles of action movies. As Robert Brookey has pointed out: “[T]he technology of video games has improved significantly, allowing games to offer cinematic visuals and complex narratives. In other words, video games have become more like movies.”² Although the spectacular aesthetics of film and video games have converged, there is still a fundamental difference in how it is used. After all, video games are an interactive medium characterized by the illusion of player agency. Thus, this chapter will focus on spectacle in these two games, particularly in interactive, in-game sequences where the player is in control (i.e., not the cinematics and cut-scenes, where the player has no interactive control over what is going on).

In order to explain video game spectacle, my chapter will combine game design theory with the academic discourse on cinematic spectacle. In particular, I will focus on the remediation of what Geoff King has called the “impact aesthetics” characteristic of the contemporary Hollywood blockbuster in the FPS genre.³ As I will suggest, the spectacle of these games operates in unison with gameplay and, in fact, even amplifies it; however, audiovisual spectacle and gameplay also have intrinsic values in themselves. Together, spectacle and gameplay produce an exciting game experience, but these two layers can also be judged on their own merits and enjoyed.

Similar to how game studies has been haunted by the separation of video games’ narrative and ludic (not to mention other) dimensions, film studies has long relied on a dualism which generated a gulf of exclusion between spectacle and narrative. This aspect is made most explicit in Laura Mulvey’s famous argument that the visual spectacle of the female body “freeze[s] the flow of action.”⁴ However, more recently, scholars have come to agree that spectacle may support the story, while at other times, the audience may simply marvel at and enjoy spectacular images.⁵ In movies, Geoff King has argued, spectacle makes viewers identify with the object of the action instead of the characters and provides sensory pleasures.⁶ Spectacle, I would argue, serves a similar function in video games, even though they adapt spectacle to suit and support their interactive nature.

To better understand how the use of spectacular and fast-paced action in games fits into these views, one may take a closer look at game design books, which try to explain how to make a good video game. These guides clearly emphasize the ludic aspects of video games. Books such as Chris Crawford’s *On Game Design* (2003), Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman’s *Rules of Play* (2003), *Game Design* (2001) by Bob Bates, and Richard Rouse’s

Game Design: Theory & Practice (2001) all draw attention to rules, interactivity, core mechanics, gameplay, the development cycle, and commercial questions.⁷ In particular, game designers (but also game studies scholars) have highlighted gameplay as *the* key element which separates video games from other media. Rouse, for example, has argued that a “game’s gameplay is the degree and nature of the interactivity that the game includes, i.e. how players are able to interact with the gameworld and how that gameworld reacts to the choices players make.”⁸ Gameplay is thus linked to video game’s interactivity. Accordingly, game design has to focus on determining the choices available to the players and considering the ramifications of the preferred alternative.⁹

However, these publications largely ignore the ways in which audiovisual aspects impact the gameplay experience. Indeed, game design literature limits the discussion of audiovisual aspects to the practical questions of designing animations, objects, and audiovisual effects: learning the code and mastering the software rather than the effects (and affects) of the audiovisual environment. As evidenced by books such as Jean-Marc Gauthier’s *Building Interactive Worlds in 3D* (2005), Phil Co’s *Level Design for Games* (2006), and Aaron Marks’ *The Complete Guide to Game Audio* (2001), the predominance of practical, technical, and ludic questions easily eclipses the more theoretical understanding of how audiovisual elements affect the game experience.¹⁰ Indeed, some game designers, like Chris Crawford, even dismiss the audiovisual dimensions of games, as he has stressed that a video game’s audiovisual elements are not as important as core gameplay mechanics and rules of the game, going as far as cautioning game designers against the use of “eye candy,” i.e., cosmetic elements used to enhance the look and the sound instead of furthering gameplay.¹¹ But why do FPS games put so much emphasis on (and money into) creating audiovisual spectacle, if not for enhancing the games’ ludic qualities?

Images, sounds, and the FPS genre

From the perspective of game design, *Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare* (CODAW) and *Battlefield 4* (BF4) do not present anything new, as they adhere to the same logic, game rules, and game mechanics introduced in the classics *Wolfenstein 3D* (id Software, 1992) and *Doom* (id Software, 1994). The most central features in FPS games are the first-person view, the visual presence of the barrel of the avatar’s gun, and the focus on conflict.¹² In addition, the first-person subjective perspective constantly moves. The player experiences the action through the eyes of the avatar. As a result, it seems almost as

if a camera was attached to the avatar's head, moving through the world in one long take. Running, jumping, looking around, and crouching—these movements all affect the player's view. Finally, games in this genre are less cerebral than adventure, strategy, or puzzle games. Instead, a player starting up an FPS desires an adrenaline rush and fast-paced action that requires snap judgments and quick reflexes.¹³

While there have been some changes and refinements to the game design formula, when it comes to gameplay mechanics, not much has changed since the genre came into being a little over two decades ago. FPS gameplay depends on action hooks: the player traverses a three-dimensional world and shoots enemies, choosing from a wide range of weapons.¹⁴ While *CODAW*'s futuristic setting provides some variation from the formulaic gameplay that is the staple of the *Call of Duty* franchise (for example, the player character has new abilities when it comes to movement, such as dash, boost and sky jump thanks to a futuristic exoskeleton), with respect to its gameplay mechanics, *CODAW* is little different from its iconic forebears and essentially the same game as the first *Call of Duty* (Infinity Ward, 2003), which was released more than a decade earlier. However, the game's use of audiovisual effects has dramatically evolved.

To be sure, the FPS has always put great emphasis on graphics. Genre-defining games such as *Doom* and *Quake* (id Software, 1996) pushed the technological limits of what the player could see and hear, introducing new aesthetic experiences.¹⁵ As one of the most popular genres today, every new game is expected to continue this tradition of pushing the aesthetic experience, to flaunt more photorealistic, more eye-popping, and crisper imagery as well as dazzling sound effects.¹⁶ It is an important marketing tool that differentiates a game from the competition. As a result, triple-A FPS titles such as *CODAW* and *BF4* even incur higher production costs than the average Hollywood blockbuster.¹⁷ Some reviewers have hailed these games as more spectacular than games that have come before, highlighting the audiovisual mayhem, graphic and sonic fidelity, and fast pace in both multiplayer and single-player action.¹⁸ Comparisons to Hollywood action and blockbuster movies repeatedly pop up in popular assessments of these games: "If director Michael Bay made videogames, he would undoubtedly have produced *BF4*, an explosion-ridden, duck-and-diver first-person shooter with more than its fair share of ground-shaking blow-ups," David Crookes remarks in his *BF4* review for *The Independent*, for example.¹⁹ Indeed, FPS games such as *CODAW* and *BF4* utilize sounds and images indebted to Hollywood's spectacle-driven aesthetics, which transforms the audiovisual experience into a core ingredient in the enjoyment of these games.

The evolution of technology: audiovisual effects, spectacle, and impact aesthetics

Audiovisual spectacle is a major selling point for Hollywood blockbusters, to the point that blockbusters and spectacle have frequently been used synonymously.²⁰ In film studies, the term “spectacle” is used to refer to audiovisual elements that create action-filled and awe-inspiring stop-and-stare sequences. Spectacle offers a range of pleasures associated with the enjoyment of “larger than life” representations, more polished and intense than reality itself, a kind of escapist fantasy grounded in physical reality. Accordingly, the term “spectacle” seeks to explicate all the elements the film industry uses to entertain audiences and attract new viewers.²¹ Cinema has always been fascinated with spectacle as spectacle. Tom Gunning has pointed out that early cinema was defined by an aesthetics of attractions, a spectacle which solicits a conscious awareness of the film images that were engaging the viewer’s curiosity as film images.²²

One of the many forms of cinema spectacle is called “impact aesthetics.” Geoff King coined this term with reference to the Hollywood blockbuster, and it describes strategies such as rapid editing, unstable camerawork, and the propelling of objects toward the screen.²³ These techniques create a subjective experience of the on-screen action, as the movie effectively bombards the audience with audiovisual effects targeted at viewers’ sensations.²⁴ This affective cinematic environment immerses viewers corporeally in the spectacular action.²⁵

Indeed, in cinema, spectacle has repeatedly become a major attraction during periods of paradigm-shifting innovation, such as the coming of sound, the introduction of color images, the switch to widescreen formats, the use of computer-graphics technology, and the various cycles of 3D cinema.²⁶ Video games, on the other hand, have always been affected by the *constant* technological innovation in the computer industry. This continuous (or, rather, serial) development has influenced all aspects of video games, from control options and gameplay mechanics to graphics and sounds. A good example is *BF4*’s graphic engine Frostbite 3. It epitomizes the serial cycle of technological developments that fuel the perpetual search for improved audiovisual effects, which triple-A video games are required to fulfil as much as blockbuster movies must have state-of-the-art special effects. After all, graphics ranks among consumers’ main criteria for purchasing a video game.²⁷

While the significance of audiovisual elements differs from genre to genre, for the FPS, the absence of eye-popping graphics equals commercial suicide.²⁸

The importance of audiovisual qualities to *CODAW* and *BF4* becomes apparent in the distributors' marketing efforts: images, videos, and texts which highlight the game engines' audiovisual qualities were released and distributed before and after the games' respective launches. For example, DICE, the creators of *BF4*, released a four-plus-minute-long video boasting the new engine's power prior to the game's release, emphasizing its ability to showcase destructions, physics, dynamic environment, water effects, animations, and so on.

This steady technological progress has transformed some video games into arbiters of spectacle *as* spectacle. This final point is of particular interest, since audiovisual spectacle, in fact, allows players to immerse themselves in the game; to interact with, react to, sense, and enjoy the digital environment they project themselves into. This applies in particular to FPS games because such games are designed to deliver an interactive, adrenaline-paced and immersive action experience through the audiovisual surface. As video games by definition are interactive, the FPS game is dependent on making the player connect to the fast-paced action it showcases through the first-person view.

One of *BF4*'s claims to fame is a feature called "Destruction 3.0," which allows players to destroy virtually every part of the environment. *BF4*'s game engine supports high-resolution graphics, sports a complex physics engine, and reproduces life-like sounds, providing a myriad of audiovisual options to produce immersive spectacle. Players may destroy buildings piece by piece and mow down trees with gunfire, while tank shells and artillery punch holes into the surroundings. The spectacular effects are enhanced by a feature called "Levolution," which allows players to dramatically change the virtual environment. Here, the focus is clearly on explosive destruction, which produces breathtaking and intense moments of spectacle. The sights and sounds of collapsing houses, the sights of debris filling the air, and the sounds of exploding walls help substantiate the intense atmosphere of violence and war *BF4* wants to create.

Since players move in destructible environments, no building or cover can provide safety, which has a dramatic impact on gameplay. For example, an enemy hiding inside a house can be put down by firing a 40mm grenade at the wall, blowing the house and avatar to pieces. While the *Call of Duty* games also feature destructible environments, unlike *BF4*, the destruction of the environment is primarily scripted; i.e., triggered when players reach an invisible point in a given level. But even though the player is not allowed to exert control over the destruction in the same interactive way as in *BF4*'s gameplay, the player still has to react and navigate through the mayhem. While the two games thus feature different types of spectacular destruction (emergent vs. scripted), both games employ these spectacles for similar purposes.

First, the spectacular destructive mayhem showcases the power of the technology—that is, the power of both hard- and software—that makes possible the creation of these immersive environments. This technology allows the games to employ a multitude of audiovisual effects, intensifying the game experience through spectacle. Shots, explosions, and collapsing buildings assault players with their impressive audiovisual quality, shaping the players' experience of the gameworld. Accordingly, the quality of the spectacular audiovisual effects supports the video game tradition of investing in surface realism.²⁹ The pleasure that players derive from destroying an authentic-looking gameworld which behaves in a credible physical way and from experiencing the mayhem elevates the gameplay in the sense that feedback to actions becomes richer, but also in the sense that the pleasure of experiencing the high-fidelity imagery and sounds of the game increases.³⁰ Significantly, *CODAW's* scripted destruction (which also exists in *BF4*) gives the game a chance to construct spectacular scenes that the player navigates and fights through.

Normally, these scripted sequences feature moments of loss of control to force the player to look at a certain set piece or to perform specific actions, such as falling to the ground or turning the first-person perspective to view a collapsing building, but player control is swiftly restored, so the player can partake and experience the destruction. For example, in *CODAW's* mission "Fission," a nuclear cooling tower is destroyed when the player walks by. Even though the destruction is not actively triggered by the player as a part of gameplay, the explosion does intensify the spectacle of war and the feeling of imminent danger as the power plant is about to explode. The camera shakes, debris fills the screen, making shooting and movement harder as the player actively partakes in the scripted spectacle taking place. The scripted destruction forces the player to react and experience the audiovisual spectacle the game designer planned. Gameplay and spectacle are joined together in both games, but in different ways—as something the player often can exercise continuous control over, as feedback to actions, but also separate, as something the player has no control over and is forced to navigate through as well as experience and marvel at.

The spectacular first-person perspective

Traditionally, scholars have conceived of the first-person perspective characteristic of FPS games as a vehicle for bringing the player closer to the in-game action. For example, Bob Rehak has pointed out that, when compared to other perspectives, the first-person point of view offers players a better

perception of the interaction with the gameworld and a better feel of the body the player controls.³¹ Similarly, Geoff King and Tanya Krzywinska have claimed that “the first person experience is generally closer to one of immediacy than the third person.”³² Alexander Galloway has expanded on this idea, noting that the use of the first-person view is a visual technique that both film and video games use in similar and different ways. He divides first-person view into two categories; the subjective shot and POV (point of view). Subjective shots create the illusion that we see the world through the eyes of the character, while the POV shot merely approximates what a character would see. Subjective shots often reveal the psychological, physical, and emotional condition of the character and place us inside the head of the character.

According to Galloway, the subjective shot is unstable and volatile. It shakes, changes pitch, goes blurry, and gets blinded by light. Galloway notes that subjective shots are rarely used in film because this type of shot is often perceived as problematic in relation to narration and immersion. The closeness to a character over a long period of time may create a perceptual confusion and create an alienating effect, since it positions the viewer inside the body of another person. In video games, on the other hand, this strategy is used quite often to create a sense of motion and action.³³

Thus, the first-person perspective produces a more immersive experience for the player than witnessing the action from a godlike position placed above the action, for example. Enemies attack the avatar, and players experience the combat at close range.³⁴ The participatory dimension typical of video games accordingly forces the audiovisual elements to convey this quality, which makes the use of spectacle the perfect fit for these games. The first-person perspective brings the physical conflict close to the player and generates the impression of conflict, stress, fast-paced action, and mayhem. More importantly, FPS games depend on the player’s active involvement in violent actions in order to create an immersive and, in fact, enjoyable experience. Indeed, game designers such as Chris Crawford have suggested that players demand violence as part of the gameplay experience because it provides the most intense, direct, and physical form of conflict.³⁵ Visual spectacle and graphic depictions of blood, gore, and explosions thus produce a more enjoyable playing experience.³⁶ Witnessing this spectacle from the first-person perspective makes the action seem more direct, practically attacking the player, thus enhancing both the gameplay and the gaming experience.

The direct, physical, and violent nature of the game affects the first-person view in a manner similar to the techniques found in blockbuster action movies. Video games remediate cinema’s impact aesthetics through constant changes

of the first-person perspective, as the view shakes and tilts—is manipulated in a number of different ways, in short. In these games, the perspective is under a constant attack by external forces that heavily affect the perspective. In *CODAW* and *BF4*, in particular, the perspective often resembles a handheld camera due to the quick movements and the constant shaking of the “camera.” The player-controlled perspective from inside the body of the avatar and the lack of editing in video games enhances the effects known from cinema. Indeed, gunfights in *BF4* and *CODAW* are simply spectacular experiences. Bullets, explosions, and avatar movements shake the camera in every direction, making the image unfocused and blurry, sometimes covered by fluids, dirt, and blood.

As a matter of fact, the visuals even portray double vision and other effects of head trauma. For example, the avatar’s close proximity to an exploding flash grenade makes the screen become burned-out and shake violently, as images become overlaid by other images and sounds other than a loud beeping noise imitating a pierced eardrum disappear (see Figure 1.1). In addition, the shaky handheld camera effect applied the moment the player is hurt underscores the fact that the avatar has taken a hit. When taking a hit, the image becomes blurry, the color of the image is lost, the player’s ability to move is reduced, and tunnel vision is depicted. Moreover, the shaking movements indicate the position of the shooter, combined with a red marker pointing in the direction of the enemy. The blood-soaked first-person view in *CODAW* and *BF4* notifies the player that the avatar is nearly dead and must

FIGURE 1.1 A flash grenade obfuscates the player’s view. Screenshot from *Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare* (Activision & Square Enix, 2014).

FIGURE 1.2 *The visuals indicate that the avatar is severely injured. Screenshot from Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare (Activision & Square Enix, 2014).*

take cover. Whereas blood splatter on the camera is a well-known convention in action films, in these games, blood splatter also functions as a life-meter. In *CODAW*, when shot, the player can hear the avatar's heavy breathing and the heartbeat growing louder, muzzling out all other sounds. The audiovisual assault thus not only intensifies the perception of peril, but also indicates how to escape the situation and what is happening in terms of gameplay (see Figure 1.2).

In particular, there are several sequences in *CODAW* and *BF4* in which the view is constantly out of level and focus, making it difficult to see and move. In *BF4*'s mission "South China Sea," for example, the player boards a sinking battleship. The level and tilt of the view is off and constantly shifting as the ship is going under. This alteration to the view, combined with all the audiovisual effects affecting it, makes the firefights aboard hard, but also intense and adrenaline-packed (see Figure 1.3). Here, the spectacle impacts and enhances the gameplay experience. Spectacle is not just "eye candy"; spectacle helps or challenges the player in terms of gameplay.

Moreover, not just the enemies, firefights, and action sequences attack the first-person view, for players trigger effects such as muzzle flashes and smoke from the player's gun. In *CODAW* and *BF4*, changing a magazine prompts an animation that blocks a large portion of the view. Accordingly, changing the magazine when in a firefight, as rockets and bullets are flying toward the avatar, adds to the richness of action experienced by the player

FIGURE 1.3 *The chaos draws players into the gameworld in the mission “South China Sea.” Screenshot from Battlefield 4 (Electronic Arts, 2014).*

FIGURE 1.4 *Changing the magazine obscures the player’s perspective. Screenshot from Battlefield 4 (Electronic Arts, 2014).*

(see Figure 1.4). Similarly, the different perspectives offered by different weapons alter the depth of field. When looking through a gun sight, the world exterior to the sight becomes unfocused and thus makes the player experience tunnel vision. The player becomes more vulnerable but also more accurate.

The different gun sights are actualized through visual specifics, such as the depiction of an aim point and the sniper scope. Both games encourage players to use these gun-specific perspectives, as they serve the double function of making players better marksmen and creating a hectic atmosphere, as the sight zooms in and out of the action. Referring to film, Alexander Galloway has called this type of perspective “the masked POV” shot. As Galloway explains, this shot provides a visual indicator of looking through an instrument, which equates the viewer’s perspective with the character’s.³⁷ This function is exploited in games, since it supports gameplay but also calls to mind that the player is simultaneously in control of the action and placed in the front seat of the action.

In addition to the perspectives particular to specific weapons, *CODAW* features a thermal sight which renders the environment in blue and enemies in red (see Figure 1.5). The change between the regular first-person view and thermal sight significantly alters the audiovisual presentation, both in terms of gameplay and spectacle. This view makes it easier for the player to spot enemies and changes the aesthetical properties of the action. Similarly, the advanced sniper scope in *BF4* allows players to see everything through its magnified sight, thus limiting players’ vision. Players can only see what is right in front of the avatar as well as the extreme close details of the killing and mayhem (see Figure 1.6). The change of perspective which different gun sights provide in terms of color scheme and the possibility to zoom enhances the spectacular mayhem of the combat.

FIGURE 1.5 Thermal sight in *Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare*. Screenshot from *Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare* (Activision & Square Enix, 2014).

FIGURE 1.6 Looking through the sniper scope in *Battlefield 4*. Screenshot from *Battlefield 4* (Electronic Arts, 2014).

Attacking the player with spectacle

King has pointed out that action movies propel objects such as debris, parts of vehicles, and bars toward the camera in select scenes.³⁸ However, the FPS experience is orchestrated in such a way that every single action sequence assaults the player. In contrast to a movie, many of the video game's audiovisual elements constantly attack and fly into the first-person camera and create the perception that the player is under attack.

Games such as *CODAW* and *BF4*, which make use of destructible environments, propel objects, fireballs, bullets, lights, dust, sparks, and ricochets into the first-person view at an astoundingly high rate. Since everything disintegrates in a firefight, players may not see the enemies they are fighting, as debris and dirt fill the screen. This spectacular aesthetic underlines the chaos and action felt in the game. In particular, this feature is used in the game's vehicle levels. For example, in the *BF4* campaign mission "Fishing in Baku," the player drives a vehicle at high speed whilst getting shot by a helicopter, causing debris of different sizes and speeds to be sent into the view (see Figure 1.7). *CODAW*'s action-packed turret, UAV, and vehicles sequences employ a similar strategy. Here, the action also sends explosions, debris, and sparks at the screen at high speeds, an effect that is enhanced by the camera shaking, lens flares, and motion blur.

The feelings of assaulting impact and spectacular sensation are central features in games which involve combat of one kind or another.³⁹ In particular,

FIGURE 1.7 *The screen gets filled with debris and dirt. Screenshot from Battlefield 4 (Electronic Arts, 2014).*

the FPS is a genre that utilizes and even relies on audiovisual effects and objects to assault the player-controlled view, thereby supporting the gameplay and enhancing the spectacle. The constant waves of objects and effects resembling film's impact aesthetics, in combination with the avatar's movement, make the games feel more intense, frantic, and adrenaline-pumped. Similar to the typical blockbuster, *CODAW* and *BF4* fire a seemingly never-ending amount of objects at the first-person camera. These objects include grenades, bullets, fire bolts, explosions, and even cars and boats. Some of these objects may affect the player's health, such as grenades and bullets. For the most part, however, these objects do not have direct effects on the gameplay. However, their very existence underscores the feeling of being assaulted on a subjective level and intensifies the spectacle.

In addition, both games use particle systems, which may be described as generators churning out little images, known as particles. Ash, sparks, paper, leaves, smoke, rain, and even snow make the gamespace seem richer and help create a believable world.⁴⁰ Some of these particle effects have a gameplay function. Smoke, rain, and snow make it harder to see the enemies. However, these spectacular effects also aid the player, as they may block the NPCs' sight lines too (see Figure 1.8). Beyond the gameplay function, these visual effects command attention and admiration. In moments in which there are no enemies to fight and no explosions to dodge, the particle system ensures that the player does not lose attention. In anticipation of what is to

FIGURE 1.8 *The player-character looking at a wall of smoke. Screenshot from Battlefield 4 (Electronic Arts, 2014).*

come, this semblance of surface intensity helps uphold the impactful sensation of the game during moments of pause from the action.

As King has outlined, one of the primary techniques supporting impact aesthetics in action movies is fast editing, thereby heightening the feeling of action and speed. Explosive editing provides a powerful source of impact, combined with the movement of objects toward the camera.⁴¹ Since video games do not use editing, the need to constantly manipulate, affect, and fill the first-person view with audiovisual effects is necessary to create the feeling of action and speed. The shaking, tilting, blurring, and blinding of the perspective generates the feeling of being inside the body of the avatar. As the player affectively inhabits the virtual body, the player's body is assaulted, too, both through images and sounds. The cinematic image can certainly not be put under the same amount or duration of audiovisual mayhem and movement that befalls the perspective in *BF4* and *CODAW* in its moments of spectacle. This strategy thus highlights the interactive control the player has over the body of the avatar and gives the player challenges when it comes to control and gameplay.

The shaking of the camera in third- and first-person view is a familiar effect used in action movies to convey the action, physical assault, and violence the viewer sees. It is an important part of the impact aesthetic that film uses to make the viewer feel that what is happening on the screen is happening to them. The game cinematographer has an advantage in this respect. Since the

camera is digital, it can be placed everywhere and used in every conceivable way.⁴² The camera enjoys easy access and can portray and experience anything, thereby heightening the gameplay and the spectacle of the FPS through the use of subjective shots from any conceivable source. The use of unmanned aerial and ground vehicles (UAV) in both *CODAW*'s and *BF4*'s multiplayer and single-player modes illustrates this point, but also shows how the use of the first-person view creates the feeling of putting the player in the middle of the action. In *CODAW*, the player is allowed to control many different UAVs, often from a first-person perspective, and bring them into the theater of conflict. For example, in the campaign's second mission, the player can control a small UAV from the first-person view. The drone's movements are fast and the screen resolution is low, which creates the impression of seeing the battlefield from the UAV's point of view through its onboard camera. Importantly, the player does not see the drone's view of the battlefield from a screen or a portable device through the eyes of the avatar; instead, the player becomes the drone, changing the view, effectively transporting the feeling of embodiment from the avatar. The view shakes from the gunfire, digital glitches, and noises fly across the screen and players may zoom out and in on targets in a hyperactive fashion (see Figure 1.9). The frantic camera movements, combined with particles being thrust into the view, conveys a more kinetic and personal experience, highlighting that the player is not watching this from the safety of a control room on a screen, but is being placed right in the middle of the action.

FIGURE 1.9 *The player becomes an unmanned aerial vehicle. Screenshot from Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare (Activision & Square Enix, 2014).*

Conclusion

Video games with photorealistic graphics often draw on conventions from other audiovisual media. This reliance on other media capitalizes on players' media literacy, as it assumes knowledge of the other medium.⁴³ In particular, the FPS employs spectacle to a great extent, which profoundly impacts the intensity of player engagement in the gamespace.⁴⁴ The remediation of Hollywood's impact aesthetics allows recent FPS games to produce an exhilarating and interactive gaming experience.

Even though Hollywood cinema and video games share some audiovisual aesthetics and elements, they are put to different uses because of the difference in how these effects engage their audiences. While both media seek to offer exhilarating, adrenalin-packed moments, FPS games such as *CODAW* and *BF4* use spectacle to support their gameplay. Accordingly, spectacle plays an important, if not essential, part of the ludic experience. As a result, the separation between the ludic qualities of a game and its audiovisual elements has disappeared in the FPS genre. In games such as *CODAW* and *BF4*, the gaming experience is anchored in spectacle to such a degree that one cannot speak of the two as separate entities; one cannot dismiss the graphics and sounds as mere eye candy unrelated to gameplay. Rather, gameplay and audiovisual effects are interwoven, similar to the ways in which recent movies have merged spectacle and narrative.

FPS games draw on conventions of cinematic spectacle, but enhance them with a feeling of motion. This affective dimension allows the games to assault players with a barrage of audiovisual effects movies cannot use without alienating viewers. FPS feature more movement, as the virtual camera is constantly shaking and the perspective is constantly manipulated in order to create the feeling of action and assault. The violence, the kinetic action, and the adrenaline-pumped gameplay are all more enthralling than ever before because of heightened audiovisual spectacular effects inspired by film aesthetics. Video games' use of cinematic conventions is easily recognizable in the audiovisual spectacle contemporary FPS embrace, but these games do not just reuse these cinematic aesthetics; instead, they build upon and enhance spectacle through medium-specific traits, creating an audiovisual environment defined by ludic and spectacular elements.

Notes

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