Femto's Descent Analysis

(Analysis by Parladax)

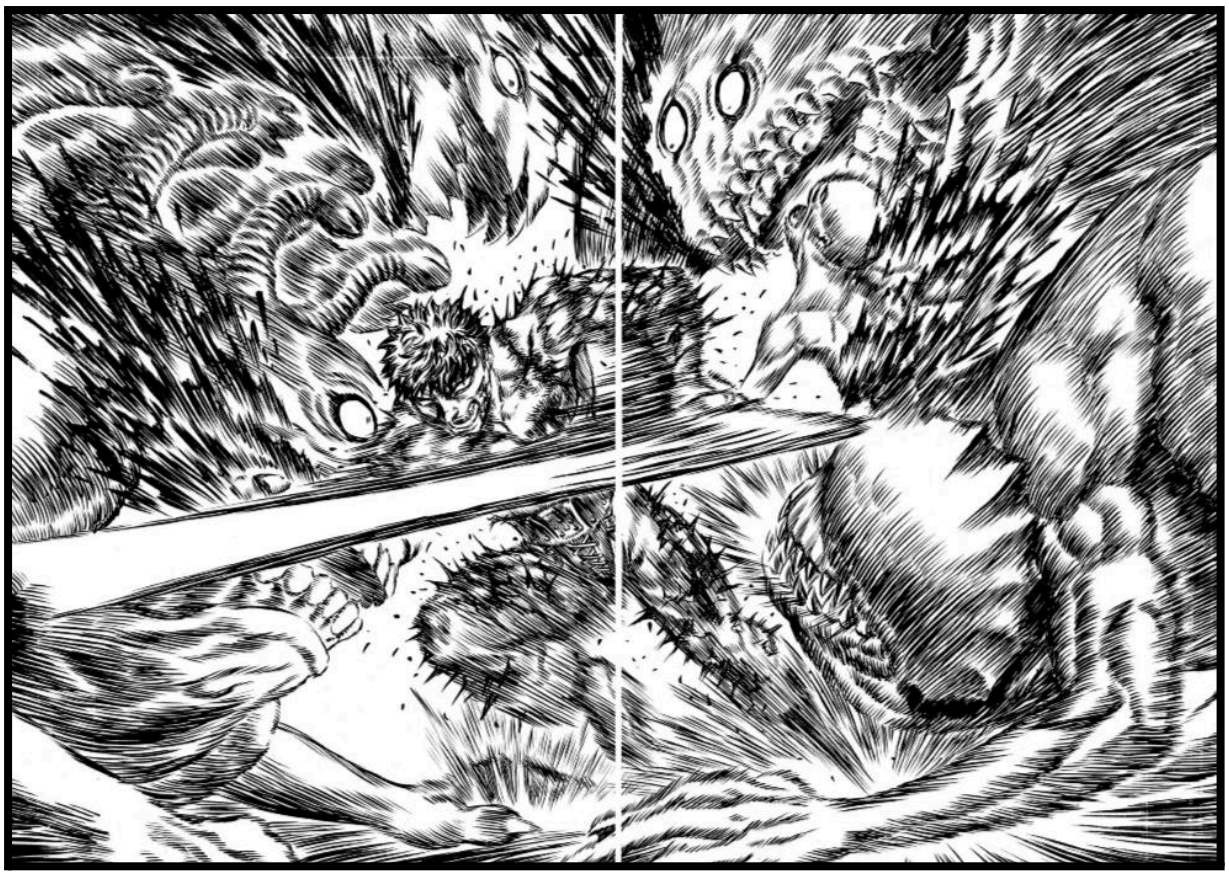
In this analysis I will focus on one panel, one scene in particular (although I will elaborate on other parts of the work,while remaining connected to this panel), from the Berserk manga written by Kentaro Miura. This scene is Femto's descent in volume 13.

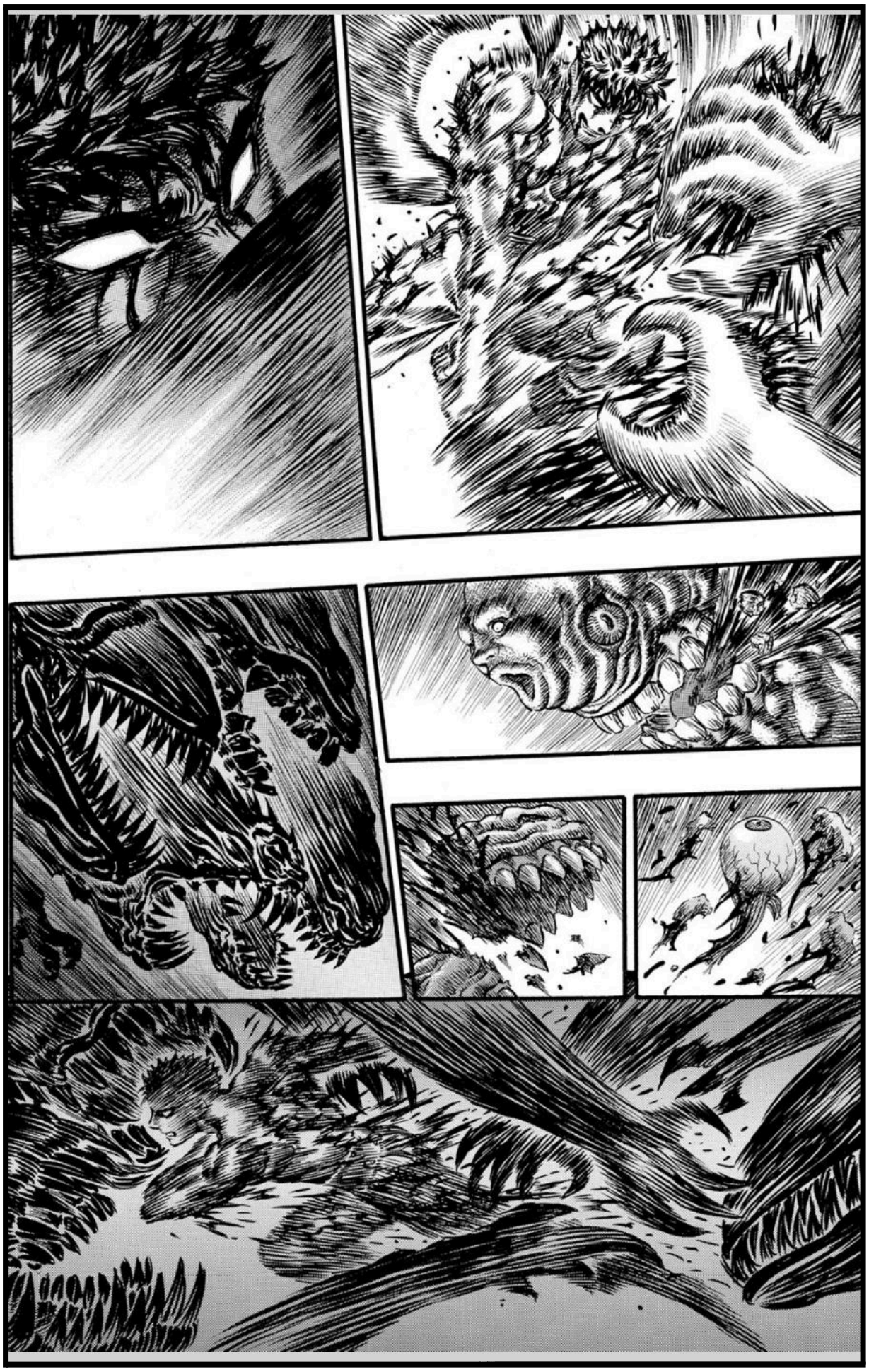
I intend to begin by providing context on the scene before delving into a more in-depth analysis. Then, in a second step, I'm going to do a conventional but also artistic analysis; this is one of my first major attempts at analyzing drawing, so I apologize if it's not perfect.
Enjoy your reading!

Before the scene

So before we see the scene of Femto's descent in chapter 86, in volume 13, I'll quickly provide some context.

At the beginning of volume 13, we will see, through the eyes of the different members of the Band of the Hawk, the chaos caused by the eclipse. Throughout the beginning of volume 13, we witness the gradual death of almost the entire Band of the Hawk and also the rape of the character Casca by the apostles, a nightmarish vision, a descent into madness. Even the character of Guts falls into a form of madness, anger.
So, to put it simply, throughout the beginning of the volume we only see the apostles as almost unstoppable forces, only Guts manages to stand up to them, but in doing so, he loses part of his own identity.





(Chapter 85)
In the style of the drawing, Guts is intertwined with the apostle; he is secretly dehumanized, acting like a beast, a beast which, as a reminder, will later become a very important symbol for Guts, the same symbol associated to hatred/rage, an emotion that Guts fully expresses in these two panels, manifested by the erasure of the pupils in the drawing.

The reason I used the word "secretly" is because on first reading we don't see Guts as dehumanized in this scene; we actually see his great fighting spirit, a very human thing, but that's normal because he's surrounded by beings who are even less human than a man behaving like a wild beast; the environment of the eclipse is so chaotic at that moment that even a wild beast is nothing.

If we want to go even further, we can also say that Guts is drawn in the same way as the apostles, It is not designed the same way in terms of morphology, but rather in terms of technique; Guts is drawn in a dark style, with the blood standing out most prominently, it further accentuate his bestiality, the chaos/confusion, and his dehumanization.

To fight monsters, you almost have to become one yourself, but even during the eclipse, that is not enough, for there is something more powerful than a monster, an archangel.



QUICKENING: END

In this panel, the symbolism is quite obvious: Griffith is "born" as Femto, hence the egg shape which directly relates to the Behelit, symbolizing birth, but in Griffith's case, rebirth.

And for those who are curious, yes, falcons can lay eggs 🐣

Beginning of chapter 86

First of all, the chapter is titled "Birth" clearly evoking the birth of Femto, who has just hatched from his egg.


THE BIRTH ...
THE FIFTH BLESSED KING.
BIRTH
ベルセルク
誕生
THE NEW DEMON KING.

But I would like to clarify a few things, unfortunately I don't have the official English version so I can say whether what I'm about to specify is present in the official English version.
But in the French version, the translation of this passage is quite better, at least for me.

“Greet the birth...”
“...Of the fifth archangel !”
“the new evil overlord !"

In addition to presenting a richer dialect, this translation offers much greater openness to analysis.

For example, in the first sentence, instead of just saying that Femto was born, he is introduced to us.With a request, Guts must greet Femto presence, this asserts from the very first sentence Femto's superiority over Guts, he who has become a divine being and Guts who is a human being.

In the second sentence, the title given to femto during its presentation is changed,the “King” in the translation just above, Indeed it asserts an effect of superiority over guts and surely has a link with the castle, a symbol of Griffith.

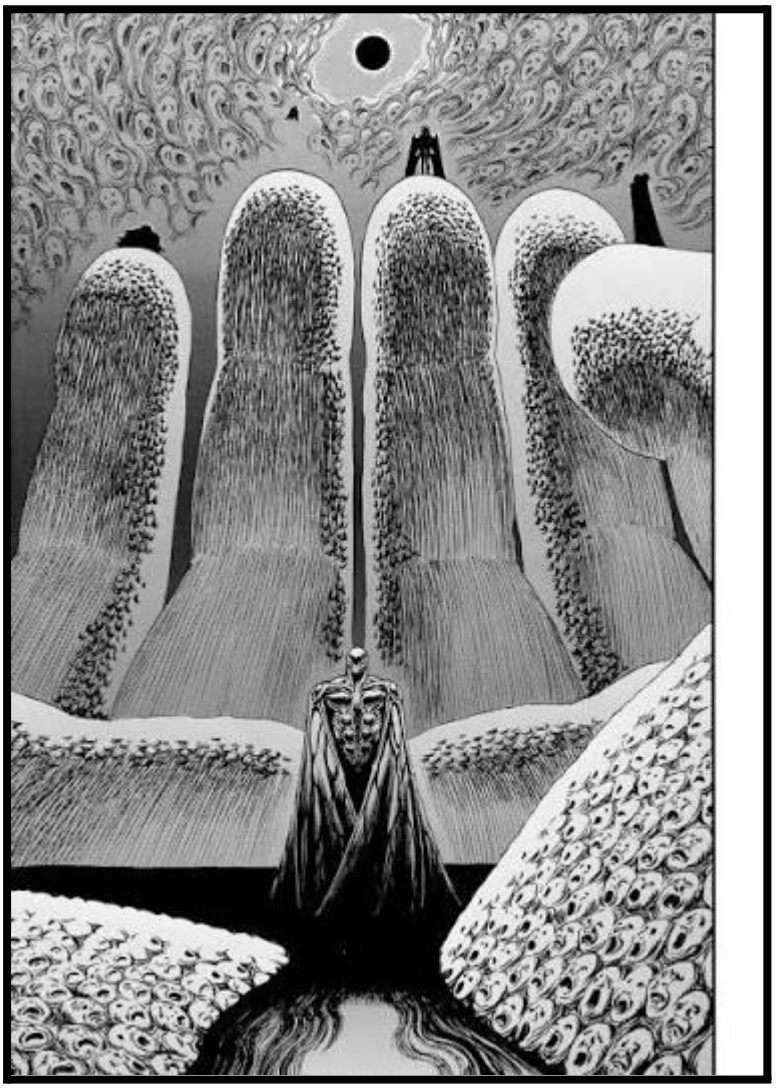
But I still prefer the term "archangel"; it also conveys a sense of superiority over Guts, but also better affirms his new position,A king is a man, an archangel is a divine being, Griffith is above Guts mortality.

The term "blessed" in the English translation also adds a lot, because Griffith is literally blessed during the eclipse...
So in this sentence both translations are equivalent, I still have my preference.

The term “Demon King” is quite poor.
The members of the God Hands call themselves archangels, therefore Demon Kings, using the term "demon." somewhat contradicts the term archangel.

Besides resembling like a Final boss title in random low-value Isekai, it's a bit of a letdown.
While overlord means the lord above the lords in the feudal system, demonstrating once again Griffith's overwhelming superiority, He who was at the bottom of the feudal system before the eclipse is now the lord of lords.

In addition to always maintaining this notion of evil by specifying "Evil overlord".



In this panel, I mainly observe three things.

The symbol of the river of blood, the meaning is quite simple; it clearly reflects the sacrifices Griffith had to make to be reborn as Femto. This river of blood was most certainly formed because of Femto's birth itself, he who was inside an egg.

To go further, the river of blood offers a materialization of Griffith's sacrifice.
Blood being the substance of the ritual,Femto's birth occurs with blood and not with amniotic fluid, showing a more violent and cruel aspect.

Then, speaking of rivers, this can be seen as a metaphor for causality, a theme very present in Berserk, with the underlying idea that destiny is a flow that carries individuals away, but let's try not to go too far, the idea remains to be explored.

The centralization of Femto in the drawing.
If you look closely at the drawing, Femto is at the center of absolutely everything, which obviously reflects that he is in himself the actor and the main cause of the eclipse.
Femto is at the center of the river of blood, the Godhands are around him, the soul vortex swirls around him in the sky and the eclipse is just above Femto,in the center of the drawing.
It's a fairly well-known process to show the importance of a character by placing them at the center of the drawing, but the technique of making everything revolve around them to show their role in the situation is a very good idea.

Finally, the last thing I notice is the eclipse itself; it's a very characteristic symbol of Griffith, yet almost never mentioned, everyone prefers to mention the incredible symbol of the falcon.

First of all, what exactly is an eclipse?
The eclipse is when the Moon passes between the Earth and the Sun, totally or partially obscuring the solar disk.
We can go further, but the basis of the eclipse is this. Don't laugh, I'm sure some people don't know the definition of an eclipse.

The character of Griffith is consistently linked to light, whether through the manga's artwork, his hair color, his armor, or his symbolic connection to the falcon.
And Femto is constantly associated with darkness, whether in his physical appearance, his actions, or even his title “the wings of darkness Femto”.

I think we can easily make the connection; Griffith is also associated with the moon, thus literally representing the moon and its darkness blocking the sunlight, light which is also him...It allows us to see a little better the complexity/contradictions of the character.
But we're not here to explore that aspect of the character, perhaps another time.

For me, in this panel, showing the eclipse directly above Griffith in the center is also a way of associating Griffith with a celestial body, thus highlighting the divine aspect of the character,the moon, the sun, and therefore the eclipse, being a celestial body, constantly observes the world, as if omnipresent, represents the great presence and power of Femto, He, as previously mentioned, was at his lowest point a few chapters ago.

The sun symbolizes warmth, divinity, light, power, and life.
The Moon symbolizes shadow, intuition, fertility, divinity, emotions, and our inner world.
The Moon blocks out sunlight and casts its shadow on the Earth, Griffith becomes Femto and even becomes a symbol/incarnation of the shadow itself covering the earth.

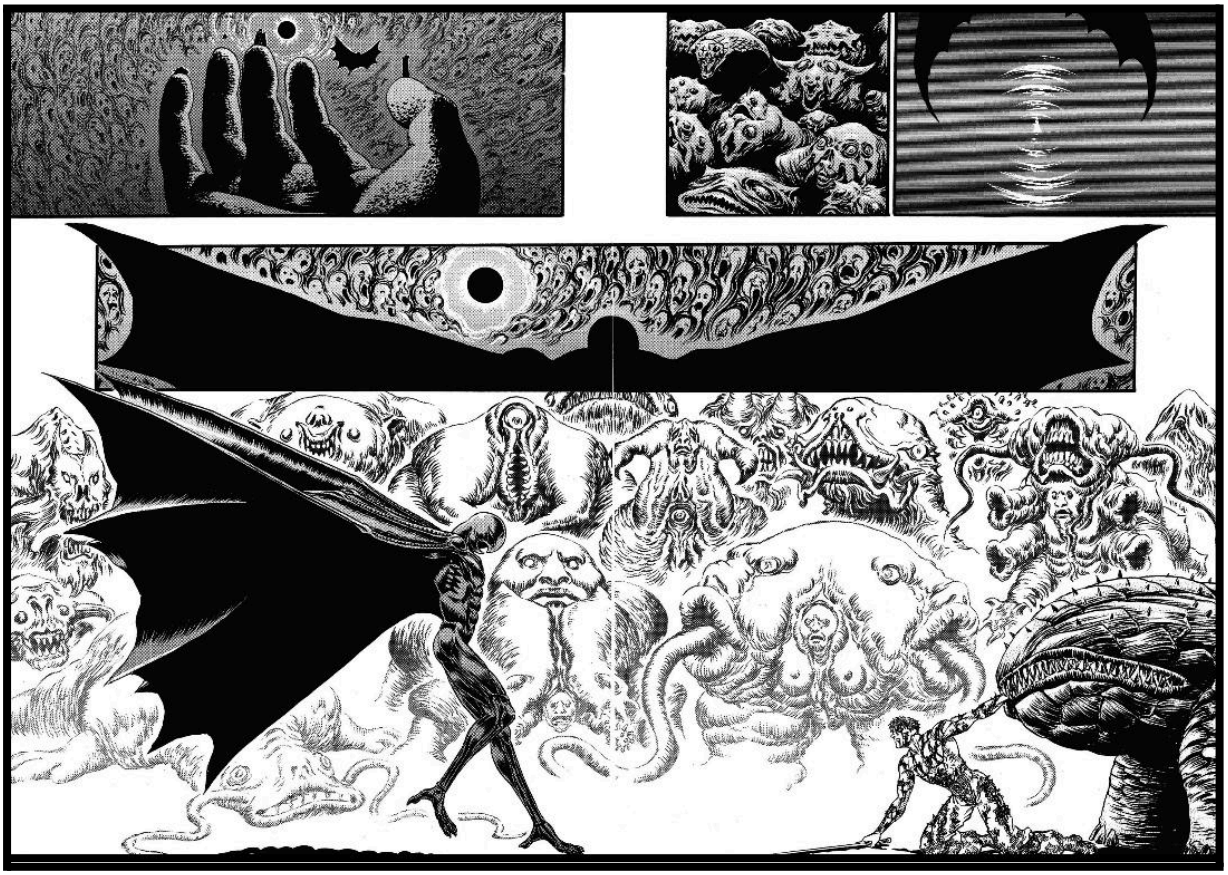
Regarding intuition, inner world and emotions, I think it's linked to Griffith's motivation/decision-making regarding the eclipse.

Regarding fertility, I strongly believe that this is linked to the rape of Casca, and this is even reinforced with the Moon child.

Regarding the sun, which represents life, the moon obscuring the sun from the earth can simply symbolize death, which is very evocative of the eclipse event.
Even though, paradoxically, life will still be created during the eclipse.

The arrival of Femto

We finally arrive at the panel I wanted to mention, the one that gave me the idea for this analysis.



Shadow figure and the faces of the damned

Before Femto's face-to-face confrontation with Guts, the panel shows us Femto arrival, in addition to increasing the tension, Kentaro Miura decides to Representing Femto via a shadow, well, we can explain this in a very simple and certainly somewhat reductive way by saying that Miura wasn't going to draw Femto with details in his panels, but I will still give a deeper meaning to this.

The eclipse that is always visible above Femto's character to reinforce the connection, aligns well with Femto's presence as a shadow.

The idea of not fully showing Femto before his confrontation with Guts is a great staging choice; the shadow effectively creates a divine/demonic presence.

The panel also uses centralization with the character of Femto, placing Femto's body in the center to showcase the size of his black wings.
While displaying the eclipse.
The emphasis is placed on Femto's arrival by giving him a powerful/divine appearance; basically, he Aura farm and Miura helps him.

So the fact that Miura decides to hide Femto in the artwork is, in my opinion, an excellent choice.
Hiding a character to increase tension, create a powerful or even divine aura, or sow confusion is a technique often used in Berserk and also in other fiction.

In Berserk, sacrifices, the victims of the apostles, and humans consumed by evil end up absorbed into a collective spiritual mass.
And Miura decided to draw it as a sea of faces, and the result is rather disturbing, a kind of living mass of suffering.

Faces are a materialization of the flow of causality.To begin, the flow of causality is the idea that all events are linked by the chain of destiny.
And his faces represent the human suffering caused by this causality.
It is human suffering that fuels the birth of Femto, so the fact that he is constantly surrounded by the sea of faces during the eclipse is not a coincidence.

Then, giving it a face shape, with eyes, creates the impression that it's looking towards the center; the birth of Femto is like representing that all human suffering is concentrated there.

Above the monsters, an archangel

One of the first things we see in this panel is the fact that the Apostles, beings who were shown as superior during the eclipse, are now "facing" Femto, who has been relegated to the background.
And it's more important than we think; it's almost one of the only times the Apostles are relegated to the background in a full panel, because even the horror that is the Apostles, facing Femto, pales in comparison.
And then there's the fact that they are very well lit in the drawing, whereas the apostles have always been depicted associated with darkness,conversely, Femto is drawn completely dark with wings devoid of any glimmer of light.
I still think it's to show the importance of Femto's character; the fact that this process and Symbol are used to show Femto's superiority contrasts sharply with how Griffith was in previous chapters; he was constantly portrayed as weak to elicit pity. Now even monsters are in the background, facing him.



The apostles are shown in darkness and in the foreground.



Femto, at the center of the panel despite the presence of apostles, definitively shows a much more overwhelming figure.

Why did I decide to circle Femto with a red marker?
This is probably going too far in the interpretation, but we can clearly see a difference in the intensity of the color;There is a sort of grey aura that separates Femto from the dark blackness of the apostles.
As if to emphasize that he would still be a far superior being (this cannot evoke things like “a being of light” due to Femto title, which is linked to darkness).

Divine representation vs. human tragedy

Femto, in his design, has no imperfections on his body, unlike Guts, who is completely covered in blood.
Femto is like a gigantic shadow with its wings; he's even elevated since he hasn't fully landed in the panel, directly demonstrating his superiority over Guts, who is kneeling on the ground with his arm caught in the mouth of an apostle.
Therefore, Guts is not free to move about, unlike Femto with his wings spread wide.
This is a good technique for directly showing an opposition between the two characters in the drawing.


...FITH ?...
GRIF...

(two panels after the Femto descent)

The contrast in the drawing that I had highlighted is much more visible on this panel,Femto has a perfect figure, no dirt or blood on him, and an inhuman appearance in addition to the presence of apostles behind him,Guts, covered in blood and unable to stand upright, but from which we can still see the human in him,A completely white background; if we follow the same logic as with Femto and the apostles, there is nothing behind Guts except white, because he is the only human thing during the eclipse at that point, but well, Casca is there so it doesn't really work.

Guts says Griffith's name but with an interrogative sentence, clearly highlighting Griffith's divine ascension.

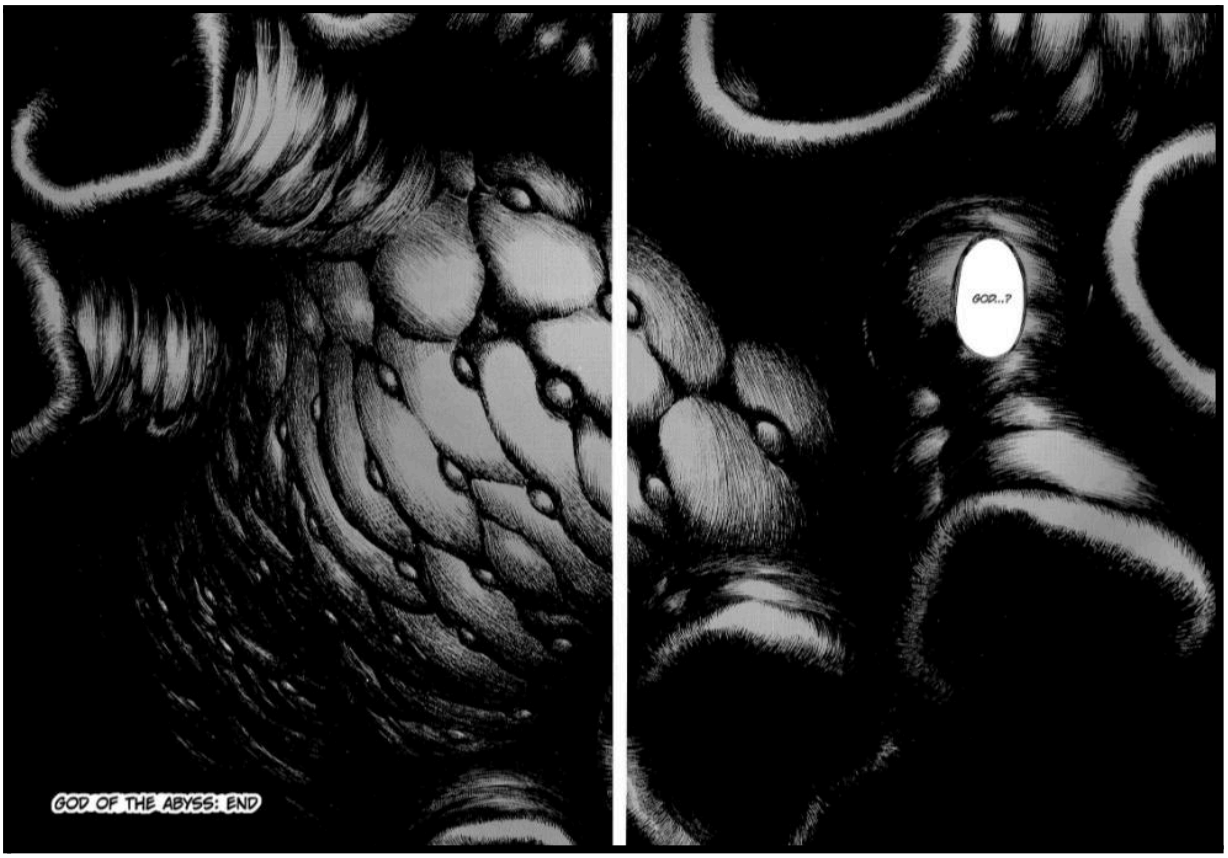
Wings and freedom

To understand this and how wings are a symbol of freedom for Griffith, you “need” to look at a chapter that is no longer readily available.



Okay, first off, I know this chapter is not more canon, but I still intend to use it because I find it particularly interesting.

In any case, I only intend to use the "I want wings" passage and not the rest of the chapter.

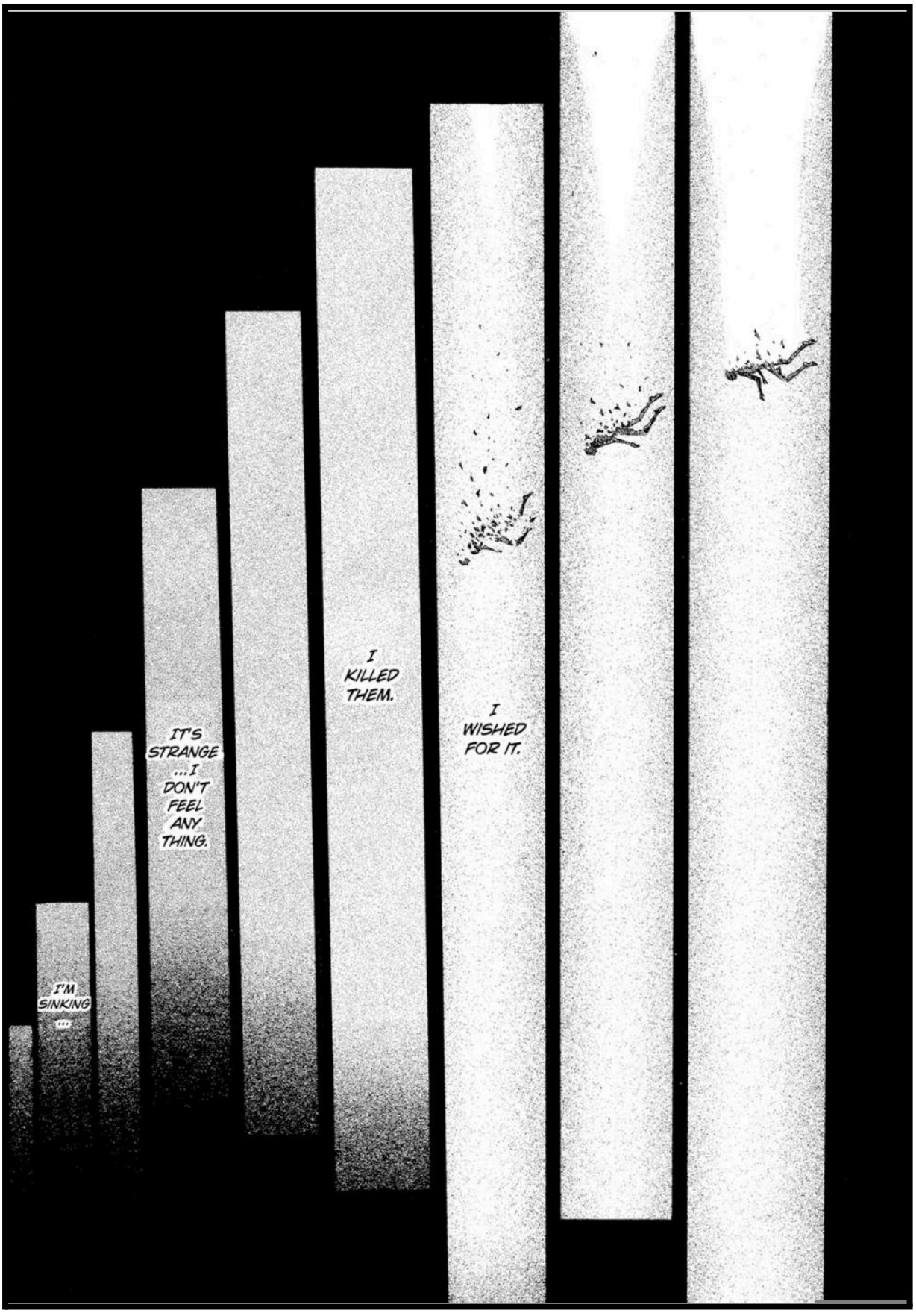


(Last panel of chapter 82, direct link to chapter 83)

But to explain why Griffith wants wings, I'm going to divide this into two parts.

-Surface explanation
-What do the wings symbolize?

Surface explanation



(Chapter 82)

In this panel, we can see Griffith literally **sinking**, falling downwards; the desire for wings after this experience makes sense, to gain the ability to rise.

The desire for wings to be able to be above everyone else is also a possible explanation.

What do the wings symbolize?

The symbolic meaning of wings can change depending on which pair of wings we are referring to, for Griffith, it seems consistent if we talk about the falcon's wing.
I will also explain why Griffith desires wings, taking into account his situation before the eclipse began, because, as a reminder, Griffith asked for wings before his rebirth as Femto.

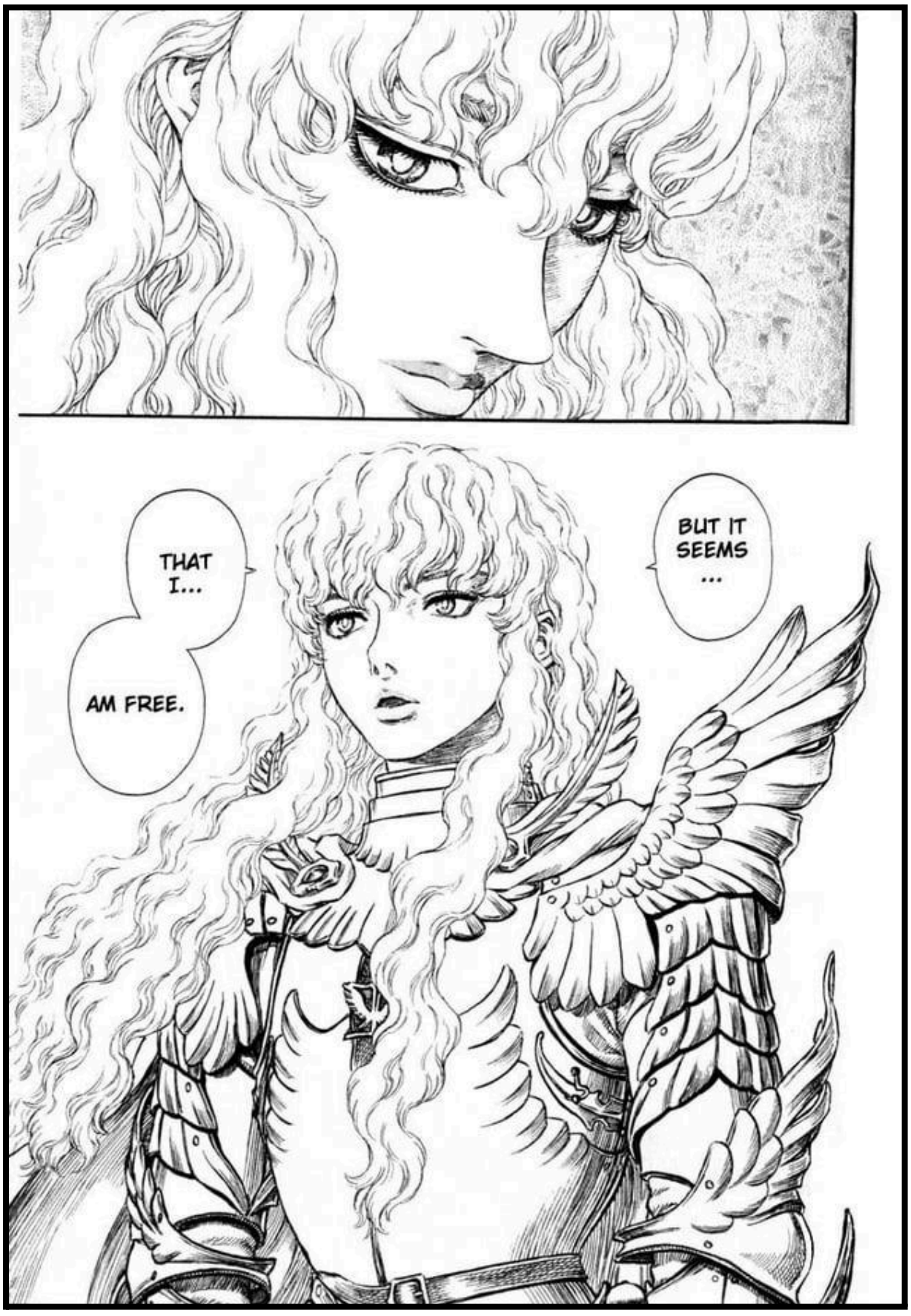
Before the eclispe, Griffith had more or less lost everything, he was weak and miserable and could only rely on Guts and the members of the Band of the Hawk to live/survive.

The falcon wings symbolize power, something necessary for Griffith to achieve his dream and overcome his current condition.
The falcon is also revered as a symbol of power and of nobility, the desire for nobility is clearly linked to Griffith's dream with the castle and also to his former position which he had hard-earned before being tortured.

But above all, falcon wings symbolize freedom and independence.As already mentioned, Griffith was dependent of Guts and the Band of the Hawk; in order to progress and realize his dream, he must gain independence.
It's also a parallel with Guts who, for more or less the same reason (still about independence), decides to leave the Band of the Hawk, which more or less (We shouldn't blame Guts) is the beginning of the chain of events that will lead Guts to the eclipse, causality.

Griffith's desire for freedom is closely linked to this.
The fact of not being dependent on someone, not being locked up as during torture for example, and the ability to act without constraints.
Griffith could not accomplish all of these things before the eclipse, hence the symbolic request "I want wings".

All of this considerably reinforces the symbolic power in the panel of Femto's descent, showing his freedom of movement by spreading his wings wide, unlike Guts with his arm, whose freedom was bound and even torn off by the apostles, resulting in the loss of his arm, this makes even more sense in another panel following the work.



(Chapter 178)

This statement comes right after his reunion with Guts; it shows that he has broken away from Guts, that he has gained his freedom through his independence.

And this is symbolized by the right falcon wing on Griffith's armor.
The wing is imposing and symbolically replaces Guts, who was his right arm; it also contrasts with Guts' metallic right arm, which shows his loss of freedom, while Griffith's right wing symbolizes his newfound freedom.

The blinding light

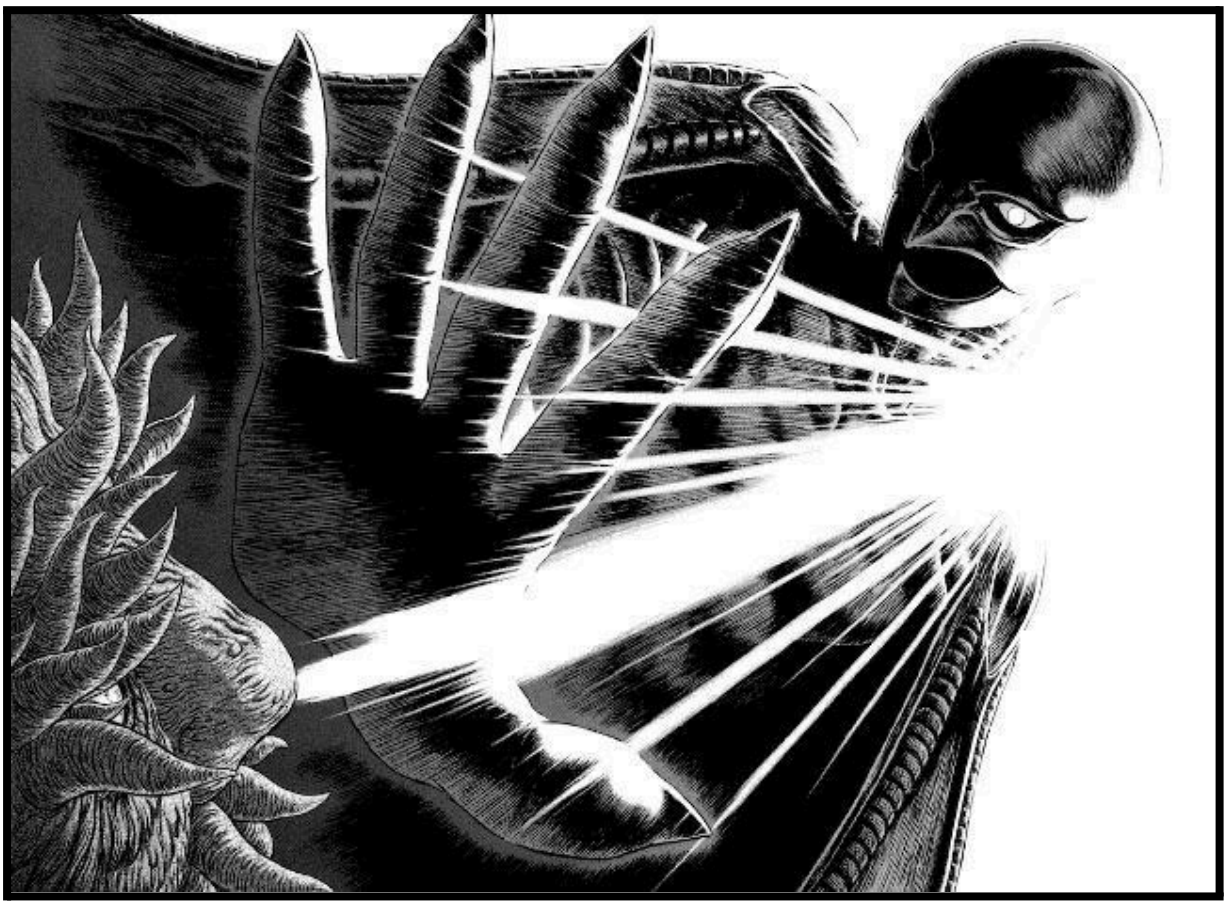
Light is closely associated with Griffith's character as a symbol because it has a link to divinity and also to the characterization of Griffith's character.



This panel is the one that comes right after Femto's descent, so when he finally sets foot on the ground.
First, we can observe, as usual, his flawless figure, and also the fact that he tramples the faces of the damned, which is clearly visible in the drawing.
I remind you that the faces of the damned are the victims of causality.

But above all, we see an intense light on Griffith's back, a blinding light in Femto's presence;and this is not the first time and it won't be the last time either, even though Femto is presented as a being of darkness.

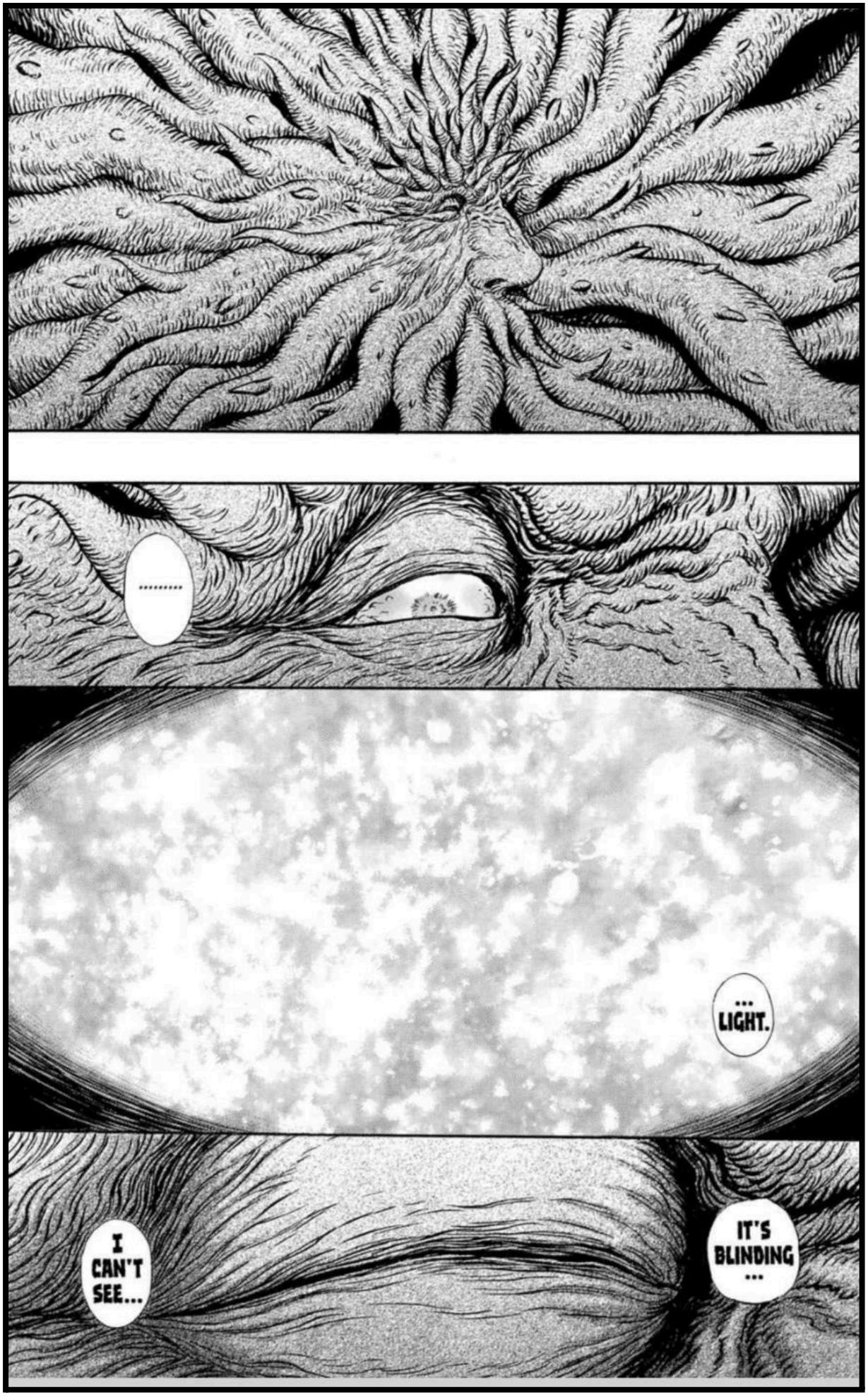
In the panel depicting Femto's descent, one could already see this light that separated Femto and the apostles.



(Chapter 303)

In another Femto descent in the manga,we can see the presence of this light again, and it is even much more powerful.

Even when faced with an all-powerful being like Ganishka, the light remains blinding, and is again represented behind Femto.From a view below, Femto is presented as a very imposing figure, dwarfing Ganishka, who is one of the largest entities in all of Berserk.


.....
... LIGHT.
I CAN'T SEE...
IT'S BLINDING ...

The light is described as blinding



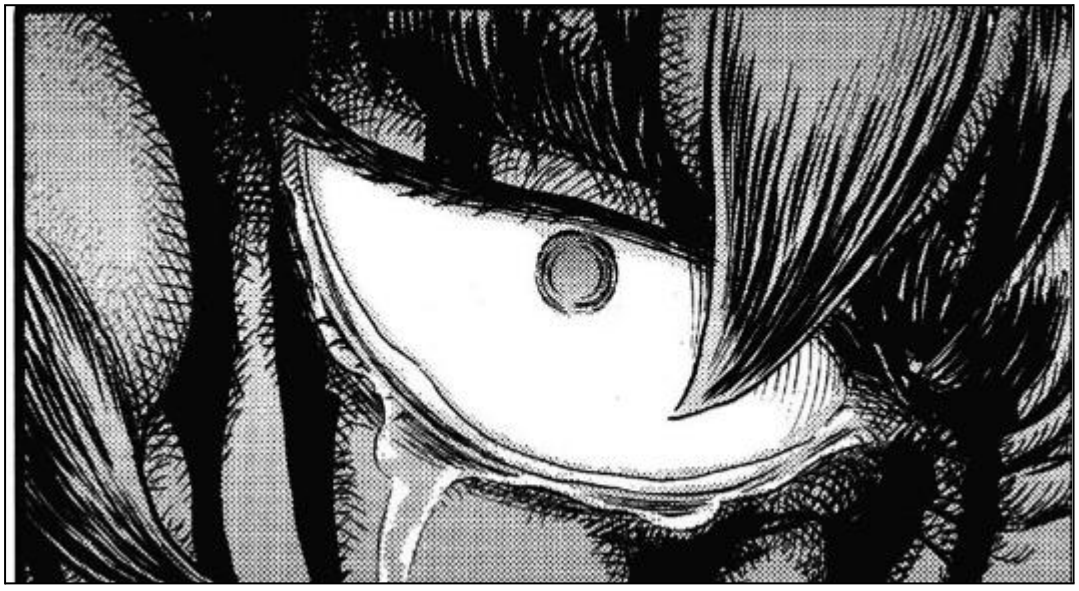
The light is so intense it's scorching; I think this connects Griffith to the sun, I remind you of the link to the eclipse (moon and sun…)

We have an antithesis with "You can see", which is paradoxical because the light was described as blinding just before and even burning to the touch.

“Because he who bears light…Exists in the deepest shadow”

This clearly represents Griffith, who fits this description, but also alludes to Lucifer. The name Lucifer means "light-bringer"
or “morning star” which represents its past splendor.The meaning of "light bringer" is the one that interests us because it is directly linked to Griffith through the dialogue “he who bears light”.
Paradoxically, Femto is the one who brings the light, whether in the eclipse or against Ganishka.

Miura, through drawings using light and symbols like celestial bodies, wants to associate Femto with the divine to represent the devil.
Much like a messianic figure, an entrance is created by asking people to greet his birth,he is presented as an imposing figure, and then when he lands, he brings the light while he is the driving force behind the disaster.
Light is a symbol of deception, which aligns well with Lucifer.



I wanted to conclude the analysis on this panel from chapter 86, firstly, because it's stylish, a concrete reference to the painting about Lucifer the “Fallen Angel” painted by Alexandre Cabanel in 1847 (several other panels could work, but they're also associated with Casca's rape, so I'm going to avoid using them).

Guts is consistently associated with darkness while Griffith/Femto is associated with light, and even when Femto alludes to Lucifer, it's a human being, Guts, who represents Lucifer.

Thanks for reading!