



# Presence of Baudelaire in Today' s Japanese Manga: The Flowers of Evil (Aku no Hana, 2009-2014) by Shuzo Oshimi

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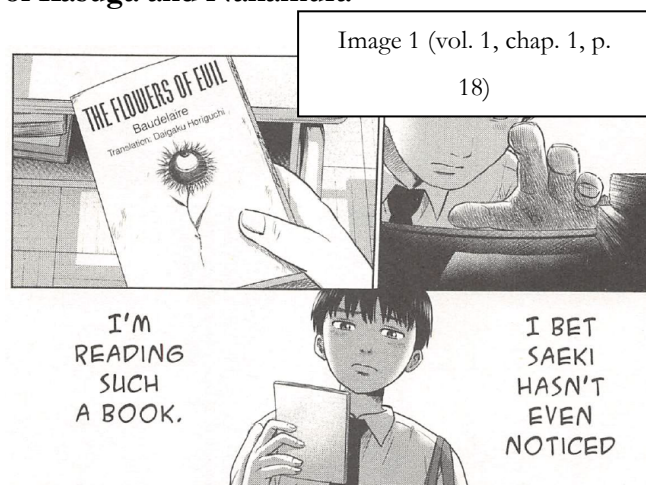


## 1. Introduction

Since the Meiji era, and even these days, Baudelaire continues to influence many artists in Japan. It is not only for the poets or novelists, but also for some creators of the subculture that Baudelaire’s *Flowers of Evil* is one of the greatest sources of their inspiration. During 1975 and 1976, Hideo Okazaki and Kazuo Uemura published in a comic magazine a series of Manga with the title of *Aku no Hana* which translates to *The Flowers of Evil*. In 1990, a Japanese rock band Buck-Tick also released an album named “Aku no Hana”. Recently, between 2009 and 2014, Shuzo Oshimi published a Manga of the same title<sup>1</sup>. The eleven volumes of his work which contain 57 chapters sold over 2 million copies and it was adapted into an Anime which is composed of 13 episodes. Its popularity extended even beyond Japan: his work was translated immediately into English and published as *The Flowers of Evil*<sup>2</sup>.

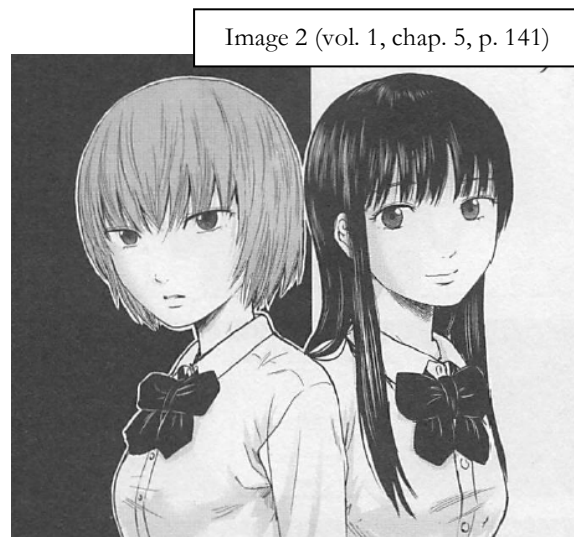
### 1-1. The story of the first half: crimes of Kasuga and Nakamura

The story of the first half (Chapter 1-33) is about the junior high school days of Kasuga, who is a bookworm and especially loves Baudelaire’s *Flowers of Evil* (cf. Image 1). He has a crush on Saeki, the most popular and beautiful girl in the class. Kasuga considers this girl to be his “femme fatale”, so she is like the “Madame Sabatier” for Baudelaire. But the true “femme fatale” for Kasuga, like the “Jeanne Duval” for Baudelaire, is not Saeki but another female classmate, Nakamura, a strange and lonely girl without friends who is isolated in the class.



Their relationships start one day when Kasuga impulsively steals the gym-clothes of Saeki. This shameful act is seen by Nakamura, and she blackmails Kasuga and forces him to become her slave. At almost the same time, Kasuga gets closer to Saeki, who does not know about his perversity, and he becomes her boyfriend. But Nakamura still continues to blackmail him, so Kasuga is split between these two “femmes fatales” (cf. Image 2).

Between these two girls, it is Nakamura who finally attracts Kasuga the most. Little by little, Kasuga discovers she is also bored with her own life and she needs Kasuga’s help to add excitement to her life, or, to say with their expression, to reach “the other side” of this world.



For that purpose, at first, Kasuga and Nakamura invade the classroom during the night, and they vandalize the classroom. Kasuga and Nakamura’s vandalism was luckily not

<sup>1</sup> Oshimi Shuzo, *Aku no hana*, 11 volumes, Kodansya, 2009-2014.

<sup>2</sup> In our article, we use for the quote the eleven volumes of English translation version of *The Flowers of Evil*, published by Vertical, in 2012-2014.

detected by anybody, except Kasuga's parents and Saeki who did not want to reveal their crime to the other people. After that, they try to escape their rural town by riding Kasuga's bicycle over the mountain which confines them like a prison, to reach "the other side" of the world. But their escape fall through. Finally, at the summer festival, they climb to the top of a float and pour kerosene on themselves, intending to light themselves on fire. But before they can use the lighter, Nakamura pushes Kasuga over the float, and herself, she gets tackled by her father. At this point, the first half of the story is finished.

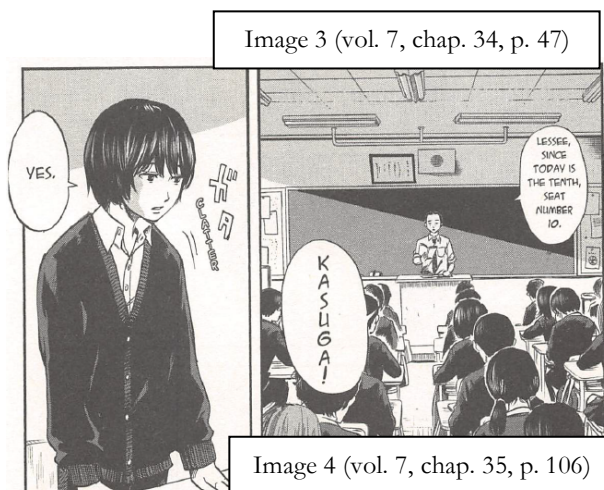
### 1-2. The story of the second half: mental growth of Kasuga

The story of the second half (Chapter 34-57) is, for the most part, about Kasuga's high school life, and concentrates less on the destructive impulses of adolescence, but rather on Kasuga's mental growth (cf. Image 3). Now, three years have passed after the crimes with Nakamura, and he lives in another city with his parents. Nakamura and Saeki are no longer there. In his lonely and gloomy life with the consciousness of guilty, he has met a new heroine, Tokiwa, who loves literature too, and who has a dream of becoming a novel writer (cf. image 4). In his relationship with her, Kasuga looks for a way to construct relationships with other people, with society and with himself.

The mood of this second part is completely different from the first part. As Oshimi writes, its fundamental theme is "somehow discovering the adolescence's end"<sup>3</sup>. At the climax of the second part, Kasuga visits his old town with Tokiwa to see Nakamura again, to unleash himself from Nakamura's memory and start his own life. The second half of this Manga finishes with a scene where Kasuga dreams about his near future. In this future, which will perhaps become true, he is already married to Tokiwa. And, in this dream-future, he starts to write the novel of Nakamura, so this Manga finishes by returning to the start, in a complete circle.

### 1-3. Deepness created by the construction of two parts

Thanks to this second half, this Manga does interpret very well the principal themes of Baudelaire's poetry, not only like vanity, solitude, sadism, but also consciousness of guilt and remorse. If this Manga were finished with the climax of self-immolation of the first half, Oshimi couldn't have created such a deep impression about remorse. Furthermore, the gap between the first and second parts creates deepness and complexity in this work. It may be comparable to the esthetic depth which exists in the Baudelaire's works, for example, in the development of his poetry between *The*



<sup>3</sup> Volume 3, p. 172.

*Flowers of Evil's* first edition and its second edition, or even between *The Flowers of Evil* and *Paris Spleen*.

## 2. Influence of Baudelaire and several artists

### 2-1. The presence of the book of *The Flowers of Evil*

In this story, where can we find Baudelaire's influence except in the title of the Manga which means "The Flowers of Evil"? At first, we can point out the frequent presence of this poetry book. For Kasuga, this book is a symbol of his identity, being not like the other boys in his rural town, but he is someone more sophisticated who can read Baudelaire. But his pride is hurt by Nakamura who attacks this book literally by trampling it under her feet or by tearing it up before Kasuga's eyes. At last, Kasuga burns his treasured book in order to declare to Nakamura his decision to leave Baudelaire behind and become Nakamura's partner in crime.

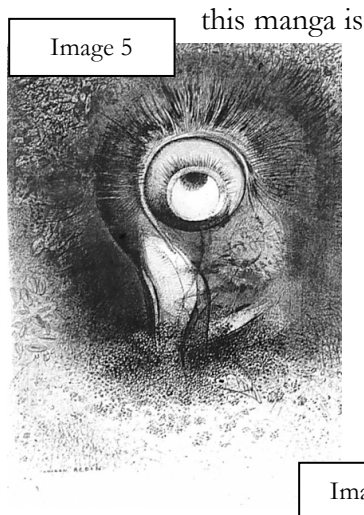
In the second half, the book of *The Flowers of Evil* also has an important role to connect Kasuga to the new heroine, Tokiwa. It is when she is taking in her hands this poetry book in the bookstore that Kasuga passes through and notices the book she takes is *The Flowers of Evil* he admired before. Now he tries to forget this book which drove him to the crime. This book symbolizes for him his criminal emotion he felt in the past. But its presence continues to be important despite his feelings to try to deny it.

### 2-2. The presence of other artists

In addition to Baudelaire and his poetry, we can find out the presence of many other artists in this Manga. In the bookshelf of Kasuga and his father, beside their pillow, in the bookstore, Oshimi places many books he has probably read in his adolescence. As Japanese writers: Mitsuharu Kaneko, Kyusaku Yumeno, Hyakken Uchida, Tatsuhiko Shibusawa, Yasutaka Tsutsui, Akinari Ueda, Sakutarō Hagiwara, etc. And as French poets: Breton, Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Lautréamont, etc.

### 2-3. Odilon Redon's "Eye-flower"

The artists whose name appears in not only such writers, but also the artists of other genre like painters: Duchamp, Goya, Redon, Ernst and Delvaux. Among them, the most important is the French symbolist painter, Odilon Redon, who was also an admirer of Baudelaire and drew the illustrations for *The Flowers of Evil*. Oshimi himself writes that Redon is the painter he loves the most and he repeatedly uses one of these illustrations of Redon: a flower of big eye (cf. Image 5<sup>4</sup>):



this manga is

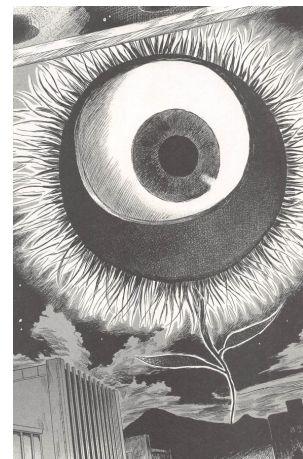


Image 6 (vol. 7, chap. 33, p. 25)

I based the eye-flower on the book's cover on an illustration from the real *The Flowers of Evil* by artist Odilon Redon, modifying it for the purpose. Redon is my favorite artist. (volume 1, p. 44)

Oshimi uses this image (cf. image 6) as symbol of the confused and nihilistic emotion in

<sup>4</sup> Odilon Redon, Lithograph, 1883, Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington, [ <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/odilon-redon-il-y-eut-peut-etre-une-vision-premiere-essayee-dans-la-fl-eur-there-was-perhaps-a-first-vision-attempted-in-the-flower> ].

the adolescence throughout the story.

#### 2-4. Joël Séria's *Don't deliver us from Evil*

After Redon, there is another important non-literature mediator who connects Oshimi to Baudelaire. It is a French movie called "Mais ne nous délivrez pas du mal", in English, "Don't deliver us from Evil". Oshimi, finding this movie by chance, decided to use in his story the final scandalous scene of this erotic movie about two little girls who, influenced by the reading of *The Flowers of Evil*, try to commit many crimes. At the end, when the other girls of their school are doing singing and dancing performances for their parents, the two girls recite a poem from *The Flowers of Evil* and set themselves on fire to die. Oshimi, fascinated by this scene, let his main characters, Kasuga and Nakamura, do essentially the same thing, in a Japanese style, with a float of the summer festival as I previously mentioned. Oshimi explains himself the way how he found and decided to use the image of this movie in his Manga:

There's a movie called Don't's Deliver Us from Evil. It's a 1971 French film from director Joel Seria. I learned about it from film critic Tomohiro Machiyama, who wrote a short coment on the cover of Vol. 2 of this series. I was unacquainted with the film when I was writing this manga, and I wasn't particulaly conscious of it at the time, but now that I think about it, I see that I was pretty throughly influenced by Mr. Machiyama's spiel. The girls worship Baudelaire and Lautréamont, create a kingdom of evil all for themselves, and fall into ruin, and I overlaid my own youth on theirs<sup>5</sup>.

Thus, there are many influences of Baudelaire in Oshimi's *Aku no Hana*, not only because of a direct impact he received from his experience of the lecture of *The Flowers of Evil* in his adolescence, but also, and more than that, because of the cultural environment surrounding him formed by the many European and Japanese artists who inherited Baudelaire's esthetic.

### 3. Translation of Horigutchi

#### 3-1. Various translation of *The Flowers of Evil* in Japan

In general, the work of the translation is very important for the reception of the foreign literature in their culture. In fact, *The Flowers of Evil* has many different translations in Japan. To take only the principal translations published in paperback, there are four translations by Yoshio Abe, Motoo Ando, Daigaku Horiguchi and Shintaro Suzuki. Among them, what Oshimi and his protagonist read is Horiguchi's translation. We can recognize it easily, because every time when Oshimi shows the book of *The Flowers of Evil* in his Manga, he has never forgotten to write on its cover the name of translator, Horiguchi. By comparison with Abe's translation, the Horiguchi's translation is often not faithful to the original, although his style of translation creates the mood of decadence, sometimes more strongly than Baudelaire's original. So we can consider that Oshimi's Manga is obviously inspired by Horiguchi's translated *Flowers of Evil* he read in his junior high school days.

#### 3-2. Comparison between Horiguchi's translation and Baudelaire's original meaning

Furthermore, the particularity of the style of Horiguchi's translation penetrates in this Manga through the chapter title. The titles of almost all the chapters since 28 until the final 55 adapt certain verse translated in Japanese by Horiguchi's characteristic expression. The following is the list of the comparison between the English translation of the Manga's title and the English translation of the verse of *The Flowers of Evil* of which Oshimi borrows the Japanese translation of Horiguchi. This list confirms that Oshimi uses for each chapter after chapter 28 Horiguchi's expression in his translation. In addition, it is obvious that there are often differences between the English translation of *Aku no Hana*'s chapter title

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<sup>5</sup> Volume 3, p. 34.

and English translation of Baudelaire’s *Flowers of Evil*. Comparing the English translations and Japanese or French original phrases, the English translations are always accurate for the original expression. It indicates as a result the specialty of the style of Horiguchi’s translation which sometimes changes the superficial meanings of Baudelaire’s verse.

Chapter	Chapter’s Title in the English translation of <i>Aku no Hana</i>	Chapter’s Title in the Japanese original of <i>Aku no Hana</i>	Source in <i>Les Fleurs du Mal</i> Oshimi appropriates for the Chapter title of his <i>Aku no Hana</i> <sup>6</sup>	Translation in English of William Aggeler (1954)
1	The Flowers of Evil	悪の花 [Aku no hana]	<i>Les Fleurs du Mal</i>	The Flowers of Evil
2	Invitation to a Journey	旅への誘い [Tabi eno izanai]	053, L’Invitation au voyage (旅へのいざない)	Invitation to the Voyage
3	Cause for Blackmail	脅迫の理由 [kyouhaku no riyuu]		
4	Cloudy Skies	曇り空 [kumori zora]		
5	A Promise	約束 [yakusoku]		
6	Immorality	背徳 [haitoku]		
7	Madness	暴走 [bousou]		
8	Confession	告白 [kokuhaku]	045, Confession	Confession
9	The Fraying String	ほつれる糸 [hotureru ito]		
10	Spleen and Ideal	憂鬱と理想 [yuuutu to risou]	Spleen et Idéal (幽鬱と理想)	Spleen and Ideal
11	That Which Is Not Easily Saved	救いがたいもの [sukuigatai mono]	084, L’Irrémédiable	The Irremediable (Roy Campbell, 1952)
12	That Which Punishes Self and Soul	われとわが身を罰するもの [wareto wagamiwo bassuru mono]	083, L’Héautontimorouménos	The Man Who Tortures Himself
13	A Dawn of the Heart	心の夜明け [kokoro no yoake]	046, L’Aube spirituelle	Spiritual Dawn
14	Melancholy	憂鬱 [yuuutu]	075-078, Spleen (幽鬱)	Spleen
15	Twilight	たそがれ時 [tasogare doki]	095, Le Crépuscule du soir	Twilight
16	The Offended Moon	機嫌を損じた月 [kigen wo sonzita tuki]	***, La Lune offensée	The Offended Moon
17	De Profundis	深淵より叫びぬ [sin-en yori sakebinu]	030, De profundis clamavi (深淵より呼びぬ)	Out of the Depths Have I Cried
18	The Sun	太陽 [taiyou]	087, Le Soleil	The Sun
19	A Certain Curious Man’s Dream	あるもの好き男の夢 [aru monozuki otoko no yume]	125, Le Rêve d’un curieux	The Dream of a Curious Man
20	A Certain Boy’s Promise	ある少年の約束 [aru syounen no yakusoku]	? (***, Les Promesses d’un visage)	
21	The Curious Man’s Dream	もの好き男の夢 [monozuki otoko no yume]	? (125, Le Rêve d’un curieux)	
22	The Flowers of Evil in	悪の華 可憐に咲く	? ( <i>Les Fleurs du Mal</i> )	

<sup>6</sup> The number before the poem’s title indicates its order in the second edition of *The Flowers of Evil* (1861). The mark “\*\*\*” means the poem was not included in the second edition.

	Lovely Bloom	[aku no hana karen ni saku]		
23	Dance of Ruination	破滅の舞踏 [hametu no butou]	? (097, Danse macabre)	
24	Song of Summer	夏の歌 [natu no uta]	? (056, Chant d’automne)	
25	The Flowers of Goddess	女神の華 [megami no hana]	? (Les Fleurs du Mal)	
26	The Doings Men and Women in Love	愛し合う男女の [aisi au danzyo no]	108, Le Vin des <u>amants</u> (愛し合う男女の酒)	The Wine of <u>Lovers</u>
27	A Darkening Sky	かげる空 [kageru sora]	050, Ciel brouillé	Cloudy Sky
28	A Heatless Sun	熱のない太陽 [netu no nai taiyou]	030, De profundis clamavi, v. 5, « <u>Un soleil sans chaleur</u> ».	<u>A frigid sun</u> floats overhead six months,
29	Tomorrow Morning, Will You Yet Be?	明日の朝、君達は果たして? [asu no asa, kimitati ha hatasite?]	091, Les Petites Vieilles, v. 83, « <u>Où serez-vous demain</u> , Eves octogénaires, » (「明日の朝あけ、君達は果たしてどこにいるだろう?」).	God’s terrible claw, <u>where will you be tomorrow?</u>
30	Softly Respiring in the Depths of Stifling Darkness	重苦しい闇の奥で静かに呼吸づきながら [omokurusii yami no oku de sizukani ikiduki nagara]	048, Le Flacon, v. 9-10, « Mille pensers dormaient, chrysalides funèbres, / <u>Frémissant doucement dans les lourdes ténèbres</u> , »	Many thoughts were sleeping, death-like chrysalides, / <u>Quivering softly in the heavy shadows</u> ,
31	Sullied, Pure Gaze	汚れて清いまなざし [yogorete kiyoi manazasi]	021, L’Hymne à la beauté, v. 2, « O Beauté ! ton <u>regard, infernal et divin</u> , ».	Beauty ? Your <u>gaze, divine and infernal</u> ,
32	I Will Love You!	愛してやろう ! [aisite yarou!]	091, Les Petites Vieilles, v. 7, « Ou tordus, <u>aimons-les</u> ! ce sont encor des âmes. ».	Or distorted, <u>let us love them</u> ! they still have souls.
33	Happy Are They Who May Take Flight	翔び立ち得る者は幸なり [tobitatu eru mono ha saiwai nari]	003, L’Élévation, v. 15-16, « <u>Heureux celui qui peut</u> d’une aile vigoureuse / <u>S’élancer</u> vers les champs lumineux et sereins ; ».	<u>Happy is he who can</u> with his vigorous wing <u>Soar up</u> towards those fields luminous and serene,
34	Precious Thoughts	貴重な思い [kityouna omoi]	116, Un voyage à Cythère, v. 49, « Devant toi, pauvre diable au <u>souvenir si cher</u> , ».	Before you, poor devil of <u>such dear memory</u>
35	While Yearning for Far-Off Skies	遠つ空しのびつつ [tootu sora sinobitutu]	028, Le Serpent qui danse, v. 12, « <u>Pour un ciel lointain</u> . ».	For a distant sky.
36	Clinging to an Unfulfilled Dream	見果てぬ夢に追いつがる [mihatenu yume ni oi sugaru]	013, Bohémiens en voyage, v. 7-8, « Promenant sur le ciel des yeux appesantis / <u>Par le morne regret des chimères absentes</u> . ».	Surveying the heavens with eyes rendered heavy / <u>By a mournful regret for vanished illusions</u> .
37	Shafts of Winter Sunlight	冬の日ざしがさっと差し込む [huyu no hizasi ga satto sasikomu]	006, Les Phares, v. 12, « Et d’un <u>rayon d’hiver traversé brusquement</u> ».	<u>Lit for a moment by a wintry sun</u> ,
38	The Name, Too, Forgotten Now	今は名も忘れはてし [ima ha na mo wasurare hatesi]	009, Le Mauvais Moine, v. 6, « Plus d’un illustre moine, <u>aujourd’hui peu cité</u> . ».	And more than one famed monk, <u>seldom quoted today</u> ,
39	Summoned from the Abyss	深淵より呼びぬ [sin-en yori yobinu]	030, De profundis clamavi	Out of the Depths Have I Cried

40	Tearing the Cosmos’ Happy Harmony	目出度い宇宙の調和を 破る [medetai utyuu no tyouwa wo yaburu]	083, L’Héautontimorouménos, v. 13-14, « Ne suis-je pas <u>un faux</u> <u>accord</u> / Dans la divine <u>symphonie</u> , »	Am I not a <u>discord</u> / In the <u>heavenly symphony</u> ,
41	A Scent as Sweet as a Secret	秘密のように甘い香を [himitu no youni amai kaori wo]	011, Le Guignon, v. 13, « Son <u>parfum doux comme un secret</u> ».	Exhales <u>perfume soft as secrets</u>
42	In Short, I Was Dead	つまり、僕は死んでい た [tumari, boku ha sinde ita]	125, Le Rêve d’un curieux, v. 12, « <u>J’étais mort</u> sans surprise ».	<u>I had died</u> and was not surprised ; the awful dawn
43	That Was Your Soul	あれは君の魂だもの [are ha kimi no tamasii damono]	014, L’Homme et la mer, v. 2, « La mer est ton miroir ; tu contemples <u>ton âme</u> »	The sea is your mirror ; you contemplate <u>your soul</u>
44	What My Sinful Heart Seeks	罪深い僕の心が求める のは [tumi bukai boku no kokoro ga motomeru noha]	018, L’Idéal, v. 9, « <u>Ce qu’il faut</u> <u>à ce cœur profond</u> comme un abîme ».	<u>The real need of my heart</u> , <u>profound</u> as an abyss,
45	You as Dear as the Night Sky	夜の空ほど君恋しきよ [yoru no sora hodo kimi kosisiki yo]	024, Je t’adore à l’égal de la <u>voûte nocturne</u> ..., v. 1.	I adore you as much as the <u>nocturnal vault</u> ,
46	O Fountain of Eternal Youth	永遠の青春の泉よ [eien no seisyun no izumi yo]	060, Franciscæ meae laudes, v. 17, « <u>Fons aeternae</u> <u>juventutis</u> ».	<u>Fountain of eternal youth</u> ,
47	Soon Homeward Now	今しも家路に帰るのだ [imasimo iezu ni kaeru noda]	105, Le Vin des chiffonniers, v. 17, « <u>Reviennent</u> , parfumés d’une odeur de futailles ».	<u>Come back</u> , smelling of the wine-cask,
48	A Dear One’s Remains Enshrouded	愛する者の死骸が包ま れている [aisuru mono no sigai ga tutumarete iru]	081, L’Archimie de la douleur, v. 11-12, « <u>Dans</u> le suaire des nuages / Je découvre <u>un cadavre</u> <u>cher</u> , »	In the winding sheet of the clouds / I discover <u>a beloved</u> <u>corpse</u> ,
49	Do You Know Anguish?	君は知るか、懊悩を？ [kimi ha siruka, ounou wo?]	044, Réversibilité, v. 1, « Ange plein de gaieté, <u>connaissez-vous</u> <u>l’angoisse</u> , ».	Angel full of gaiety, <u>do you</u> <u>know anguish</u> ,
50	Still I Have Not Forgotten	僕はまだ忘れずにいる [boku ha mada wasurezuni iru]	099, Je n’ai pas oublié..., v. 1, « <u>Je</u> <u>n’ai pas oublié</u> , voisine de la ville, »	<u>I have not forgotten</u> our white cottage,
51	In the Light of Thine Eyes	そなたの瞳の光には [sonata no hitomi no hikari niha]	021, Hymne à la beauté, v. 5, « Tu contiens <u>dans ton oeil</u> le couchant et l’aurore ».	You contain <u>in your eyes</u> the sunset and the dawn ;
52	Have You Noticed	君は気づいているか [kimi ha kiduite iruka]	091, Les Petites Vieilles, v. 21, « <u>Avez-vous observé</u> que maints cercueils de vieilles... »	– <u>Have you observed</u> how frequently coffins
53	To Know Whether the Sea Is Truly Generous and Kind	海が果たして寛容で親 切だかを知るがために [umi ga hatasite kannyou de sinsetu dakawo siruga tameni]	***, Lesbos, v. 51, « <u>Pour savoir</u> <u>si la mer est indulgente et</u> <u>bonne</u> ».	<u>To find out if the sea is</u> <u>indulgent and kind</u> ,
54	In the Golden Sunset	金色の夕暮れに [kin-iro no yuugure ni]	091, Les Petites Vieilles, v. 55, « dans ces <u>soirs d’or</u> où se sent revivre ».	On those <u>golden evenings</u> when one feels new life within
55	Following Time’s Passage	時すぎてのち [toki sugite noti]	121, La Mort des amants, v. 12, « <u>Et plus tard</u> un Ange ».	<u>And later</u> an Angel, setting the doors ajar,

56	We Are Those Who Wish	僕らは願う者なのだ [bokura ha negau mono nanoda]	126, <i>Le Voyage</i> , v. 142, « <u>Nous voulons</u> , tant ce feu nous brûle le cerveau ».	This fire burns our brains so fiercely, <u>we wish</u> to plunge
57	The Stuff of Our Souls	われらが心を占めるのは [warera ga kokoro wo simeru noha]	000, <i>Au lecteur</i> , v. 1-2, « La sottise, l’erreur, le péché, la lésine, / <u>Occupent nos esprits</u> et travaillent nos corps, »	Folly, error, sin, avarice / <u>Occupy our minds</u> and labor our bodies,

It is difficult to judge if the choice of each chapter’s title is due to Oshimi himself or someone else like his editor. After all, the work of Oshimi’s *Aku no Hana* contains Horiguchi’s translation. However, the superiority of Horiguchi’s translation does not mean the actual preference of Oshimi to its particular expression. But Oshimi focused consciously on this translation because it is this translation that gave him a strong shock in his junior high school days. In an interview, Oshimi explains his intention to express the feeling he had when he was a junior high school student:

**Interviewer:** To draw this work, *Aku no Hana*, did you read again Baudelaire’s *The Flowers of Evil*?

**Oshimi:** I didn’t at all. I intentionally tried not to read. I wanted to express the feeling that I had while reading it without understanding when I was a junior high school student. I thought that reading it again could influence me. If I read it now, I think it will be completely different from my reading of the past. (...) Well, I have read it a little. Having finished the junior high school part, I felt it’s OK to read now.

**Interviewer:** So, you didn’t read it intentionally in order to take advantage of the image you had when you read in junior high school, until the end of the junior high school part?

**Oshimi:** Yes. At a certain moment of the final phase, there is a scene that Kasuga is reading *The Flowers of Evil* by Yoshio Abe’s translation, rather than Horiguchi Daigaku’s translation that he was reading in the junior high school days. Because I haven’t read it too, I tried to read a little bit of Abe’s translation when I drew this scene.

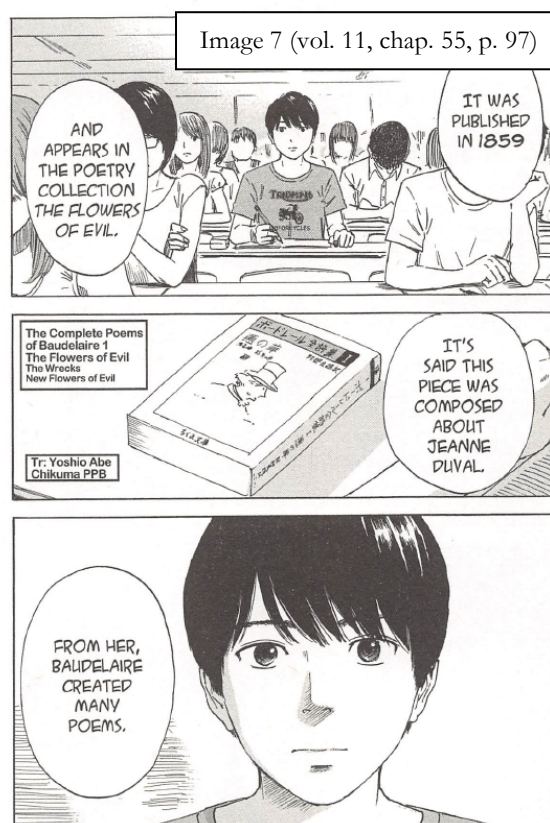
**Interviewer:** How was it?

**Oshimi:** It was very easy to understand and interesting. When I was in junior high school, I was reading in order to put on airs. But now reading it over, it seems to me something lovely<sup>7</sup>.

The way he expresses the feeling of his adolescence is very objective and he does not privilege Horiguchi’s translation. At the Chapter 55 which describes Kasuga’s life in university, we see the scene where Kasuga attends a literature lecture about Baudelaire. The book he reads is no longer Horiguchi’s translation, but Abe Yoshio’s which is considered generally more academic and accurate in the way of the translation and commentary (cf. image 7).

### 3-3. Device with chapter titles

The list of the comparison of chapter titles makes us discover the other intention of the author. As I mentioned previously, the



<sup>7</sup> This interview was published on the Internet 2014 [http://konomanga.jp/interview/4523-2/3]

story of this Manga finishes by returning to the start. This construction of circle is hinted also, very secretly, by the title of the second to the last chapter and the final chapter. The second to the last chapter's title "We Are Those Who Wish" is a quotation from "The Voyage", last piece of *The Flowers of Evil*. And the final chapter's title "The Stuff Of Our Souls" is a quotation from "To The Reader", first piece of *The Flowers of Evil*. So these titles also indicate the return to the beginning of the story. But it is difficult or even impossible for most of the readers of this Manga to discover such a device, because these words that Oshimi uses here are the expressions Horiguchi created in his translation of *The Flowers of Evil*, which is not faithful to the original meanings. After all, we can consider this as a secret message from Oshimi which suggests he created this manga by reading carefully Horiguchi's translation and by thinking well about the construction of Baudelaire's *Flowers of Evil*.

#### 4. Instead of a conclusion

Now, before finishing this article, we would like to place Oshimi's Manga in the cultural context of the reception of Baudelaire in Japan. Before, in the era of Meiji, or even later, reading and studying French literature and Baudelaire constituted the reception of the Western culture, which is something new that the old

generation did not know. It was defiance to the old authority. But today, talking about French literature does not mean challenging to the old authority. Because, now in Japan, we have a long history of the reception of French literature, especially Baudelaire, with so many translations and studies of this poet. In Oshimi's Manga too, he described carefully Kasuga's relationship with his parents, especially with his father. In fact, it is his father who introduced Kasuga to the literature and Baudelaire (cf. image 8, 9).

In others words, Baudelaire is now included in the Japanese culture so deeply that, today, reading Baudelaire inevitably requires us to consider seriously how the older generations received this poet. Sometimes by confronting with them, we have to understand their thought and inherit their cultural traditions.

