

i see myself in kampong gelam

Leonny Ong

here lies this place I know
in every whispered word, every *azan*¹ call
ringing through the walls
of my family home in Jakarta.

murals line walls of shophouses along
Arab Street, Haji Lane.
cultures blur, coexist together
where shops hawk their wares:
turkish ice cream, tapas bars, *makanan minang*²;

sweet smells mingling with faint scent
of *minyak kayu putih*³, aromas wafting
from kitchens of my childhood:
bakwan jagung, *kroket belanda*
and *nastar*.

cars roar across dirt tracks turned asphalt,
tourists buzz in by the busloads parked in
the sultan's former estate by Kandahar Street,
forgotten by time and modernity;

like crayons turned 4B pencils
against practice papers, lego
boxed in dusty cardboard, imagination
a relic of times long past.

¹Azan: The Islamic call to public prayer in a mosque, typically recited by a muezzin at prescribed times of the day.

²Makanan minang: (Indonesian) Padang cuisine.

³Minyak kayu putih: (Indonesian) Cajiputi oil, which is popular in Indonesia, meant for application on the skin for healing.