



## ***Hagitude* by Sharon Blackie – book group questions**

- Before reading *Hagitude*, which folk tales or fairy stories that include old women did you know about? How did they make you feel about getting older?
- Sharon talks about the old women that were important to her in childhood, particularly her Aunt Meg. Which older women do you remember from childhood and why?
- Sharon writes about characters in diverse books and movies that have inspired her – Kate Brown in Doris Lessing's *The Summer Before Dark*; Granny Weatherwax in Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* books; Evelyn Couch and Ninny Threadgoode in Fannie Flagg's *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café*; Belinda in *Fleabag*. Which books and films have older female characters that have inspired you?
- Of the many complex characters and archetypes described in *Hagitude* – such as the Henwife, Medial Woman (Alchemist, Mystic, Witch), the Wise Woman, the Loathly Lady, the Old Woman who Weaves the World, the Fairy Godmother, the Trickster – which resonate with you most at the moment? Who would you most like to embody as you travel through elderhood?
- If you have experienced perimenopause or menopause, did you experience strong emotions? For Sharon it was rage. Which emotions did you experience?
- How do you feel about the changes in your body as you become older? How do you come to terms with this?
- When was the last time you experienced everyday ageism and what form did it take?
- Can you think of any examples of healthy anger, expressed by women, that has changed things for the better?
- Do you think it's possible to think of menopause as a transition to a new kind of womanhood?
- How would you like to transform? What would you like to do more of as you approach elderhood?
- What do you find less relevant as you get older? Which behaviours and habits would you like to let go of?
- Sharon was able to draw solace from an ancient yew tree when she underwent treatment for cancer. She also named the red kite above her house 'Old Bone Mother': she who calls our dismembered parts back from the dead, conjuring life anew. What natural places or beings have given you a sense of groundedness, company or comfort?
- During her time in the valley of the shadow of Death, Sharon discovered the gifts of kindness, of slowing down and of learning to befriend Death. If you have experienced a serious illness, did you find it brought you gifts? What were they?
- What value do you think elder women have for society today?
- What feminine wisdom would you like to pass down to a younger generation of women?
- Sharon says the word 'hagitude' means being at ease with the unique power you embody; having a strong sense of who you are and what you have to offer the world; and having a firm belief in your necessary place in the ever-shifting web of life. Having read *Hagitude*, what does the term mean to you? Are you ready to embrace your Inner Hag?