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MARK TODD

## Foreword

The 2015 theme for *Manifest West's* annual anthology is Western Weird. The works in this collection reflect both myths and suspected truths about the part of the United States we call The West. But this year's edition focuses entirely on the tradition of the strange. To borrow from Jeff VanderMeer's definition for speculative fiction's New Weird, this volume creates a new parallel genre for work that subverts the traditional romanticized ideas about place, playing with clichés about The West in order to put these elements to discomfiting, rather than consoling, ends.

This fourth edition features thirty-two writers from across the country, but each of them has nonetheless managed to offer work that finds a home in The West. Topics included in this collection of creative nonfiction, poetry, and fiction range from The West's numinous fascination with E.T., Bigfoot, and ghosts to the West's uncomfortable relationships with its own marginalized peoples, with the region's unforgiving and sometimes violent traditions, and with its indigenous fauna and deadly landscapes. The tone of these works ranges from light—even campy—to chilling, but all allow readers to gaze straight into the many faces of what makes The West a weird place.

For the first time in the series, this year's edition includes solicited work as well as open submissions, including a number of established and award-winning writers in addition to its mission of giving voice to both published and brand-new writers.

As we were putting this anthology together, editors discovered how many of the works, regardless of genre, tended to resonate in surprising patterns. To intensify such harmonics, we decided to allow these affinities to determine the sequence of the pieces in this anthology, apportioning the works into the divisions of *The Olden Daze*, *The Ley of the Land*, and *We Are Not Alone*.

*Western Weird* is the fourth volume in Western Press Books' literary anthology series, *Manifest West*. The press, affiliated with Western State Colorado University, produces one anthology annually, focused on Western regional writing.

We hope you enjoy reading the selections we've chosen as much as we enjoyed collecting them.