Tarpaulin Cove

Herman Ward

This is one place, I know, that has not changed in thirty years,
Perhaps in a century.
The cove remains soft and wild;
The abrasive dialogue of sea and sand goes on
Uninterrupted. We are still in the old New World.
Of course, the Indians have gone and the pirates are no more.
Lovell George, the old lighthouse keeper,
And his Swedish wife, who made bread to greet the dawn,
Have departed; a button turns on the beacon in their place.
We visitors are motor-driven and wind-driven
Though the shore if it had eyes to see
Would surely notice only those who come by sail.

Today the sky is being swept by a northeast wind.
Clouds skate across blue ice,
Play at being seahorses, flowers, fields of wheat, old men –
We sing back to the sirens
Who hide behind each wave and unexpected gust of wind.

From Cape Cod Poems, p. 20. Published by The Belle Mead Press, 1982.