At exactly 5:10 a.m.
on day one of the Elderhostel on Thomas Merton
at Nazareth College, Rochester, NY,
a solitary crow invaded my sleep.
At first the caws were singular, seemingly spontaneous and casual.
But soon their cadence doubled in insistence
until there was response from another anonymous crow
who perhaps, too, had been sleeping
as I had been sleeping.
Was Tom behind it all? I wondered.
(The early hour would have suited him.)
Was this dissonant song all his doing?
Was this dialogue of birds
symbol and setting for what was to come —
a call for dialogue?
Or was this the embodiment of Zen and the Birds of Appetite?
Although I tried very hard,
I could not get comfortable enough
to fall back to sleep.