McKay is extremely angry with the Crisis for publishing his poems that he "beseeched" Du Bois not to publish; notes that Miss Fauset "had not time to waste on a non-influential and down-and-out fellow-writer;" McKay is also angered that his poems appeared in the same issue that critiqued his new book.
Mr. W. E. B. DuBois
69, Fifth Avenue
New York City

Dear Mr. DuBois,

I think I beseeched you over a year ago not to publish those poems I sent to the "Crisis" towards the end of 1925.

I must remind you again that those poems were sent to the "Crisis" for a special purpose. I was ill, I had no money, I wrote to a number of New York publications, including the "Crisis", frankly stating my situation and asking them to help me by buying a poem or more. I received prompt replies and help from some of the publications. Others that did not accept had the courtesy, with one exception, to return my poems. The exception was the "Crisis" (the only Negro publication I wrote to) which neither replied nor returned the poems. About a year and a half later, when I saw two of the poems in the "Crisis" I was surprised, because, as I said then in a letter to you (the duplicate unfortunately is in Paris) I thought the poems had gone astray in the mails. You replied with a cheque for the published ones and stating that Miss Faust was in charge when I wrote and she, I suppose, had no time to waste on a non-influential and down-and-out fellow-writer!

I had expected you, after receiving my letter, to return and not make use of the remaining poems. I wrote to my agent
in New York to call in all the prose and verse that I had sent out to various magazines. These were all returned and if I did not list the "Crisis" it was because I had already written to the Editor and I took it as a matter of course that a Negro publication of a recognised high standard would not fail to conform to the common rules of journalistic ethics.

My reasons for not wanting any of the things I sent out long ago published now are private and tactical, and I particularly resent the publication of my poem in the same number of the "Crisis" in which, in criticising my novel, the Editor steps outside the limits of criticism to become personal. I should think that a publication so holy-clean and righteous-pure as the "Crisis" should hesitate about printing anything from the pen of a writer who wallows so much in "dirt", "filth", "drunkeness", "fighting", and "lascivious sexual promiscuity".

But I have no objection to the quoted phrases as criticism, if you did not also choose (to employ the Coolidgeism) to question my motive in writing my book and bring it down to the level of the fish market. Now this is personal and you have been an editor long enough to know that it has nothing to do with criticism. And so I will reply personally to you Mr. DuBois by retorting that nowhere in your writings do you reveal any comprehension of esthetics and therefore you are not competent nor qualified to pass judgement upon any work of art.

My motive for writing is simply that I began in my boyhood to be an artist in words and I have stuck to that in spite of the contrary forces and colors of life that I have had to contend against through various adventures, mistakes, successes, strength and
weakness of body that the artist-soul, more or less, has to pass through. Certainly I sympathise with and even pity you for not understanding my motive, because you have been forced from a normal career to enter a special field of racial propaganda and, honorable though that field may be, it has precluded you from contact with real life, for propaganda is fundamentally but a one-sided idea of life. Therefore I should not be surprised when you mistake the art of life for nonsense and try to pass off propaganda as life in art!

Finally, deep-sunk in depravity though he may be, the author of "Home To Harlem" prefers to remain unrepentant and unregenerate and he "distinctly" is not grateful for any free baptism of grace in the cleansing pages of the "Crisis".

Yours for more "utter absence of restraint"

Claude McKay