Question One (50 points)
Read the three passages below carefully. The authors all use the idea of “detective fiction” or “crime novels” to talk about something else. What do they say? Write a critical essay to clarify their points and to elaborate on the similarities or differences among their views.

(1) In essence, the basic question of philosophy (as of psychoanalysis) is the same as that of the detective novel: who is guilty? To know the answer (to think you know) you have to conjecture that the facts possess a logic — the logic that the guilty party has imposed on them. (Umberto Eco)

(2) We gain experience in life in the form of disasters. We must infer the manner in which social interaction functions from various catastrophes. We have to establish the “inside story” of crises, depressions, revolutions and wars by thinking them through. Behind the events reported to us we suspect other unreported happenings. These are the real happenings. Only if we know them can we understand. This basic situation in which intellectuals find themselves — as the objects rather than subjects of history — shapes the type of reasoning which they enjoy putting into effect in reading crime novels. Existence depends upon unknown factors. Clarification comes, if at all, only after the catastrophe. The murder has taken place. What was afoot beforehand? What happened then? What sort of situation arose? Now, perhaps, we can work it all out. (Bertolt Brecht)

(3) “Detective Story” -- W. H. Auden

Who is ever quite without his landscape,
The straggling village street, the house in trees,
All near the church? Or else, the gloomy town-house,
The one with the Corinthian pillars, or
The tiny workmanlike flat, in any case
A home, a centre where the three or four things
That happen to a man do happen?
Who cannot draw the map of his life, shade in
The country station where he meets his loves
And says goodbye continually, mark the spot
Where the body of his happiness was first discovered?
An unknown tramp? A magnate? An enigma always,
With a well-buried past: and when the truth,
The truth about our happiness comes out,
How much it owed to blackmail and philandering.

What follows is habitual. All goes to plan:
The feud between the local common sense
And intuition, that exasperating amateur
Who’s always on the spot by chance before us;
All goes to play, both lying and confession,
Down to the thrilling final chase, the kill.

Yet, on the last page, a lingering doubt:
The verdict, was it just? The judge’s nerves,
That clue, that protestation from the gallows,
And our own smile . . . why, yes . . .

But time is always guilty. Someone must pay for
Our loss of happiness, our happiness itself.
Question Two (50 points)

Choose any ONE of the following passages and write a short essay in response. Your essay should consist of three parts: (i) explication of the chosen passage in your own words (ii) explanation of why you agree or disagree with the ideas therein (iii) pertinent examples from canonical literary works in support of your view.

(1) The high modernists are deeply conservative insofar as they try to save the purity of art from the encroachments of commodification and massification. Postmodern art, on the contrary, fruitfully contests mass culture not by denying it but by seemingly colluding with it yet problematizing it in effect.

(2) Realism in literature should never be confused with “reality” as such. One may contend that a realist narrative is no more real than a fantasy story.

(3) “If psychoanalysis and deconstruction have one thing to teach, it would be about how and why we must not simply give ourselves up or over to the uncanny. There has to be an abiding attachment to the familiar, even if it is one that requires ceaseless suspicion. There has to be a grounding in the rational in order to experience its trembling and break-up.” (Nicholas Royle)