Question how is *Beloved* an example of a magic realist text?

**Introduction**

**Lead up to the thesis (include three points)**

Set in the years following emancipation, Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* features the supernatural, hybrid characters, and a fractured and circular narrative.

**Thesis statement:**

In telling the harrowing story of recently freed black women in America, *Beloved* is fine example of magic realism.

**Body 1**

**Topic:** supernatural

**Topic sentence:** At its most basic, *Beloved* is a kind of supernatural ghost story. The story starts with an angry ghost haunting the 124, the house where Sethe, a formerly enslaved person, lives with her youngest daughter Denver.

**Example 1**

* Her sons were scared off by the ghost

Howard and Buglar, had run away by the time they were thirteen years old—as soon as merely looking in a mirror shattered it (that was the sign for Buglar); as soon as two tiny hand prints appeared in the cake (that was it for Howard) (3).

* The dog was maimed by the ghost

The baby’s spirit picked up Here Boy and slammed him into the wall hard enough to break two of his legs and dislocate his eye so hard he went into convulsions and chewed up his tongue (11)

**Example 2**

* And lastly Beloved’s return in the flesh (50)

Her skin was flawless except for three vertical scratches on her forehead so fine ad thing they seemed at first like hair, baby hair before it bloomed and roped into the masses of black yarn under her hat…

“What might your name be?” asked Paul D.

“Beloved,” she said, and her voice as so lo and rough each one looked at the other two. They heard the voice first—later the name. (51-52)

**Concluding sentence**

Like other magic realist texts Morrison’s *Beloved* features supernatural elements. *Beloved* is a story filled with the supernatural. Specifically, it is a ghost story, but the main ghost, Beloved is much more than a simple spirit.

**Body 2**

**Topic:** Hybrid characters

**Topic sentence:**

*Beloved* features hybrid characters that are great examples of mixing things up. Most specifically is Beloved herself. Once the ghost of an angry toddler that haunted her Mother’s house, Beloved returns in the flesh. Beloved is a hybrid in that she is both alive and dead, a full-grown woman and a child, a ghost and a person.

**Example 1**

* **She acts like a small child but is a full-grown woman.**

Unable to care for herself. Initially Paul D and Sethe think Beloved is sick, Paul D suspects cholera (53)

She can’t tie her shoes (65)

Denver has to change her bedsheets as Beloved is incontinent—Denver seems to realize who Beloved is and recognizes that she is simply not yet toilet trained (54).

* **She dotes on Sethe:**

“Sethe was flattered by Beloved’s open, quiet devotion. The same adoration from her daughter (had it been forthcoming) would have annoyed her; made her chill at that thought of raising a ridiculously dependent child” (57).

* **She has adult appetites with a child’s inability to resist.**

Paul D sees her “shine” that she is filling up with a kind of desire like a strawberry blossoming and bearing fruit (65). It culminates with Paul D having sex with her in the woodshed (117).

**Example 2**

* In the end the local black residents are horrified that this ghost has returned to the flesh.

“Ella. What’s all this I’m hearing about Sethe?”

“Tell me it’s in there with her. That’s all I know.”

“The daughter? The killed one? “

“That’s what they tell me.”

“How they know that’s her?”

“It’s sitting there. Sleeps, eats and raised hell. Whipping Sethe every day.”

“I’ll be. A Baby?

“No. Grown. The age it would have been had it lived.”

“You talking about flesh?”

“I’m talking about flesh.” (255)

**Concluding sentence**

Like many magic realist texts *Beloved* features hybrids; Beloved (the character) is an uncanny hybrid. She is both ghost and flesh, toddler and adult; moreover, Beloved is a powerful symbol of the horrors and legacy of slavery.

**Body 3**

**Topic:** Fractured Circular Narrative

**Topic sentence:**

The story of *Beloved* is told in extremely oblique prose. Morrison’s use of foreshadowing and fractured flashbacks starts to slowly fill in the blanks of the central mystery of the novel: Just what happened to Beloved and why?

**Example 1**

* The central mystery of the story is obliquely suggested many times

The name on the headstone

She heard the preacher say at the funeral (and all there as to say, surely) engraved on her baby’s headstone: Dearly Beloved. But what she got, settled for was the one word that mattered (5).

The mention of baby’s blood on her fingers (5).

Denver at school is asked by an intelligent boy: “Didn’t your mother get locked away for murder? Wasn’t you in there with her when she went?” (104)

Not until Stamp Paid shows Paul D the newspaper clipping is truth fully revealed that Sethe “a pretty little slavegirl had recognized a hat, and split to the woodshed to kill her children” (158).

**Example 2**

The stream of consciousness style of narrative. “In literature, stream of consciousness is a method of narration that describes happenings in the flow of thoughts in the minds of the characters, (<https://literarydevices.net/stream-of-consciousness/>)

We learn of the horrors in snatches of what Sethe calls ‘rememory.’ At the start of the novel the references to Beloved’s death are oblique. We get an account from almost from the perspective of schoolteacher. Finally when Paul D confronts Sethe we get a more fulsome account of what happened:

Simple: she was squatting in the garden an when she saw them coming and recognized schoolteacher’s hat, she heard wings…No. No. Nono. Nonono. Simple. She just flew. Collected every bit of life she had made, all the parts of he that were precious and fine and beautiful, and carried, pushed, dragged them through the veil, out, away, over there where no one could hurt them. Over there (163).

**Concluding sentence**

This back and forth to different time periods and the retelling of the central event of the story through a multiplicity of perspectives and the impact shows the fractured narrative that takes its time to slowly reveal the impact and brutality of the slavery and Sethe’s desperate measure to save her children.

**Conclusion**

**Restate Thesis:**

With its supernatural ghosts becoming flesh, the hybrid character of Beloved, and the fractured remembering of the past from different perspectives overtime, *Beloved* is a fine example of magic realism in American literature.