

# 1 Replacement times of a spectrum of elements in the North Atlantic based on thorium supply

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## 6 Abstract

7 The measurable supply of <sup>232</sup>Th to the ocean can be used to derive the supply of other elements, which is  
8 more difficult to quantify directly. The measured inventory of an element divided by the derived supply  
9 yields a replacement time estimate, which in special circumstances is related to a residence time. As a  
10 proof of concept, Th-based supply rates imply a range in the replacement times of the rare earth elements  
11 (REEs) in the North Atlantic that is consistent with the chemical reactivity of REEs related to their ionic  
12 charge density. Similar estimates of replacement times for the bioactive trace elements (Fe, Mn, Zn, Cd,  
13 Cu and Co), ranging from <5 years to >50,000 years, demonstrate the broad range of elemental reactivity  
14 in the ocean. Here, we discuss how variations in source composition, fractional solubility ratios or non-  
15 continental sources such as hydrothermal vents lead to uncertainties in Th-based replacement time  
16 estimates. We show that the constraints on oceanic replacement time provided by the Th-based  
17 calculations are broadly applicable in predicting how elements are distributed in the ocean and for some  
18 elements, such as Fe, may inform us on how the carbon cycle may be impacted by trace element supply  
19 and removal.

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## 20        **1. Introduction**

21            The ocean is a dynamic chemical reactor. The quantity of a particular element in the ocean is the  
22 result of a balance between the rates of its supply and removal mechanisms (Barth, 1952; Broecker,  
23 1971). For instance, most major components of sea salt are added slowly from river inflow and removed  
24 by the occasional evaporation of isolated seas. By comparing the rate of river inflow of salt to the  
25 inventory, or total amount, of salt in the ocean, one derives a replacement time (Berner and Berner, 2012),  
26 or how long it would take this source to replace all of the ocean's salt. In a steady-state system where,  
27 over some geographical or temporal average, the supply rates and removal rates are equal, replacement  
28 time is equivalent to residence time. Residence time is an often-used concept in environmental studies,  
29 and its definitions vary (e.g., Bolin and Rodhe, 1973), including how quickly the component cycles  
30 through the system or on what timescales we might expect variations in the concentration of this  
31 component. Because in general the steady-state assumption is difficult to satisfy, in this study we  
32 emphasize the more general concept of a replacement time.

33            The replacement times (or residence times) of trace elements are difficult to constrain for two  
34 reasons. First, especially for contamination prone-elements, there had been a lack of globally-distributed  
35 measurements to define their inventories. Secondly, parameters used to estimate elemental fluxes, such as  
36 input rates, are challenging to measure directly, and often a small number of discrete flux measurements  
37 were extrapolated over the global ocean. This has hindered our ability to accurately model the marine  
38 cycling of these elements. A metric for defining how these models treat Fe cycling, for instance, is to  
39 produce a global ocean Fe residence time by comparing the ocean Fe inventory to total sources in the  
40 model (which are set to equal their sinks, so in this case residence time and replacement would be  
41 equivalent). However, available global ocean biogeochemistry models produce Fe residence times that  
42 range over 2 orders of magnitude, 4 to 560 years (Tagliabue et al., 2016). This highlights the present  
43 uncertainty associated with this essential bioactive trace element's biogeochemical cycle.

44 Here, we use a technique to estimate trace element replacement times based on dissolved thorium  
45 (Th) isotope and trace element measurements from a GEOTRACES zonal section of the North Atlantic  
46 (GA03). Such temporal information is critical for understanding the ocean's role in the Earth system, in  
47 particular for understanding the distribution and cycling of the micronutrient trace elements whose  
48 availability impacts primary productivity and thus the uptake of CO<sub>2</sub> into the ocean (Morel and Price,  
49 2003; Tagliabue et al., 2014). Elements with very short replacement times (decades or less) could display  
50 biogeochemical responses to changes in trace element supply or removal that are observable on human  
51 timescales (decades to centuries).

52 The long-lived Th isotopes are scavenged from the ocean by adsorption onto sinking particles on  
53 time scales of years to decades, much faster than their rate of radioactive decay (half-life of <sup>232</sup>Th =  
54 14.1×10<sup>9</sup> yr; half-life of <sup>230</sup>Th = 75.6×10<sup>3</sup> yr). Since the source of <sup>230</sup>Th in the ocean, decay of dissolved  
55 <sup>234</sup>U, is well-known and homogeneously distributed, we can use the oceanic distribution of <sup>230</sup>Th to  
56 quantify a rate of Th scavenging, or the inverse of the residence time with respect to scavenging ( $\tau_{\text{Th}}$  in  
57 Eq. 1). In the case of <sup>230</sup>Th, its residence time with respect to scavenging is equivalent to its replacement  
58 time with respect to production via uranium decay. In support of this statement, it has been shown in  
59 models and observations that at any given water column in the ocean, scavenging removal is within 30%  
60 of production due to uranium decay (Hayes et al., 2015a; Henderson et al., 1999).

61 Common Th, <sup>232</sup>Th, is supplied to the ocean by continental material, such as mineral aerosol dust  
62 (referred to simply as dust in this manuscript) or seafloor sediments (Bacon and Anderson, 1982), and is  
63 assumed to be scavenged at the same rate as <sup>230</sup>Th. By making a steady-state assumption for the level of  
64 <sup>232</sup>Th in the ocean, <sup>232</sup>Th scavenging rates must be matched by supply of <sup>232</sup>Th by the partial dissolution of  
65 continental material (Hayes et al., 2013; Hirose and Sugimura, 1987; Hsieh et al., 2011; Huh and Bacon,  
66 1985). The ocean residence time of dissolved Th based on <sup>230</sup>Th inventories in the upper 4 km of the  
67 GA03 section ranges from 14-28 years across the basin (Hayes et al., 2015a). Given this short residence  
68 time, it is likely that the steady-state assumption holds for <sup>232</sup>Th throughout most of the ocean, and its

69 replacement time due to continental material dissolution is likely equivalent to its residence time with  
 70 respect to scavenging. Using these assumptions, one can derive a dissolved  $^{232}\text{Th}$  flux supplied to the  
 71 ocean simply by measuring dissolved  $^{230}\text{Th}$  and  $^{232}\text{Th}$  inventories in the ocean (Eq. 1).

72 Combining Th residence times with the measured dissolved  $^{232}\text{Th}$  inventories produces an  
 73 estimate of dissolved  $^{232}\text{Th}$  flux,  $F(^{232}\text{Th})$ , as a function of integration depth (Figure 1; Eq. 1; see (Hayes  
 74 et al., 2017) for more details). In Eq. 1, there is more than one way to provide consistency between units  
 75 among these terms, but here we give one way with each term followed by an appropriate unit. First,  $^{232}\text{Th}$   
 76 inventories are calculated by integrating  $^{232}\text{Th}$  concentrations, resulting in a molar amount of  $^{232}\text{Th}$  per  
 77 square meter. The  $\tau_{\text{Th}}$  in the denominator, in years, on the right hand side of the equation, results from  
 78 taking the integrated production of  $^{230}\text{Th}$  by  $^{234}\text{U}$  decay, in this case given in units of  $^{230}\text{Th}$  radioactivity,  
 79 Bq per square meter per year, and dividing by the integrated inventory of  $^{230}\text{Th}$ , also in units of  
 80 radioactivity. In these units, the integrated  $^{230}\text{Th}$  production would be simply,  $\lambda_{230}^{234}\text{U}$ , where  $^{234}\text{U}$   
 81 concentration is also in units of Bq, the decay constant  $\lambda_{230}$  being about  $9.17 \times 10^{-6} \text{ yr}^{-1}$ .

$$82 \quad F(d^{232}\text{Th}) = \frac{\int_0^z d^{232}\text{Th} dz \left[\frac{\text{mol}}{\text{m}^2}\right] \times \int_0^z (\lambda_{230}^{234}\text{U}) dz \left[\frac{\text{Bq}}{\text{m}^2 \times \text{yr}}\right]}{\int_0^z d^{230}\text{Th} dz \left[\frac{\text{Bq}}{\text{m}^2}\right]} = \frac{\int_0^z d^{232}\text{Th} dz \left[\frac{\text{mol}}{\text{m}^2}\right]}{\tau_{\text{Th}} [\text{yr}]} \quad \text{Eq. 1}$$

83 Next, one can derive the flux of another dissolved element, using the generic element Z, coming  
 84 from the same source,  $F(\text{Z})$ , using Eq. 2a. To do this, the input ratio of the element to Th of the dissolved  
 85 phase associated with a particular source must be known,  $(\text{Z}/\text{Th})_{\text{Input}}$ . Note for convenience, in Eq. 2 and  
 86 subsequent equations, we have dropped the ‘d’ to denote the dissolved phase. For the remainder of the  
 87 manuscript, when referring to fluxes, replacement time or residence time of thorium or other metals, we  
 88 are referring to those of the dissolved phase, unless otherwise noted.

$$89 \quad F(\text{Z}) = F(^{232}\text{Th}) \times \left(\frac{\text{Z}}{\text{Th}}\right)_{\text{Input}} \quad \text{Eq. 2a}$$

$$90 \quad F(\text{Z}) = F(^{232}\text{Th}) \times \left(\frac{\text{Z}}{\text{Th}}\right)_{\text{UCC}} \times \left(\frac{S_{\text{Z}}}{S_{\text{Th}}}\right) \quad \text{Eq. 2b}$$

91 In the case of dust, this input ratio could be defined as the Z/Th ratio of leachates of collected dust  
92 samples. In the case of another potential source, such as sediment porewater, one could define the  
93  $(Z/Th)_{\text{Input}}$  based on the ratio of the elements measured in the dissolved phase of collected porewater  
94 samples. However, at present, the Z/Th ratios of sediment porewaters are not well known. In a more  
95 general case, an assumption could be made as to the solid phase element to Th ratio, say, for example,  
96 using the average composition of the upper continental crust (UCC). Then this solid phase ratio would be  
97 multiplied by the relative fractional solubility of Z and Th. Fractional solubility of Z,  $S_Z$ , can also be  
98 defined by leaching experiments, in which the amount of Z that is leached from the source material is  
99 compared to the total amount of Z in the solid material used in the leach, expressed as a percentage.  
100 Relative fractional solubility of Z to Th ( $S_Z/S_{\text{Th}}$ ) is therefore the ratio of the fractional solubility for the  
101 two elements. Since Th is supplied to the ocean from both dust and seafloor sediment dissolution, in this  
102 study we will use the more general case of Eq. 2b. This equation uses the UCC as a source which  
103 subsumes two distinct sources (dust and seafloor sediments). If more were known about the Z/Th ratios of  
104 the benthic flux, it could be considered separately, but in the absence of that information, we use the  
105 simplification that the composition and relative solubility of both dust and seafloor sediments are the  
106 same. Of course, many elements have important sources whose composition significantly differs from the  
107 UCC (e.g., rivers, groundwater, etc.), this is nonetheless our starting point.

108 The goal in deriving these elemental fluxes is to compare them with measured inventories to  
109 derive replacement times. We emphasize here that our Th-based approach will not account for some other  
110 important sources to the ocean, such as hydrothermal vents. Additionally we are making no assessment of  
111 how our supply rates compare to the removal rates or otherwise assessing the steady state assumption. For  
112 instance, dissolved Fe can be removed from the ocean in a number of ways including scavenging,  
113 biological uptake, or inorganic precipitation (Tagliabue et al., 2017). If the sum of these removal terms  
114 were equal to our supply estimate based on  $^{232}\text{Th}$  fluxes at steady-state, the derived replacement time  
115 would be equivalent to a residence time. Rather than assess that equivalency here, we can use the more

116 limited replacement time concept as a way to view the relative rates of temporal cycling of a broad array  
 117 of elements that have been measured in the GEOTRACES program.

118 We can anticipate that our replacement times will overestimate the residence time if there are  
 119 sources of the elements of interest that are not accounted for by the dissolved  $^{232}\text{Th}$  flux calculated for the  
 120 North Atlantic. The sources of  $^{232}\text{Th}$  to the North Atlantic are largely dust deposition and margin sediment  
 121 dissolution. Other sources of trace elements to the North Atlantic may include hydrothermal venting,  
 122 rivers, estuaries in which riverine sources can be diminished (Andersson et al., 1995; Boyle et al., 1977)  
 123 or enriched (Shiller, 1997), submarine groundwater discharge, and/or water masses that advect a  
 124 dissolved signal derived from processes occurring at or before their point of origin (preformed signature).  
 125 At steady state all these sources will be equal to the sum of removal fluxes, again written in the form of  
 126 the tracer conservation equation for the generic dissolved element, Z, in Eq. 3.

$$127 \quad \frac{dZ}{dt} = F(AD) + F(^{232}\text{Th}) \times \left(\frac{Z}{\text{Th}}\right)_{\text{input}} + F(\text{vents}) + F(\text{rivers}) - F(\text{scav}) - F(\text{biol}) - \dots = 0$$

128 **Eq. 3**

129 Here, F(AD) represents the sum of advective and diffusive circulation fluxes into or out of the “box” of  
 130 ocean in question, F(vents) represents source from hydrothermal vents, F(rivers) the source from rivers,  
 131 F(scav) represents removal by scavenging, F(biol) represents removal by biological uptake, and there may  
 132 be many other terms in the full balance not accounted for here (represented by “...” in Eq. 3).

133 Rearranging Eq. 3, we can estimate the replacement time of dissolved element Z,  $\tau_Z$ , by dividing the  
 134 inventory, or total amount, of dissolved Z in the ocean “box” in question, by the sum of its source terms  
 135 (Eq. 4). Inventories are calculated by integrating dissolved elemental concentrations with depth from the  
 136 surface downward.

$$137 \quad \tau_Z = \frac{\text{inventory of } Z}{F(AD) + F(^{232}\text{Th}) \times \left(\frac{Z}{\text{Th}}\right)_{\text{Input}} + F(\text{vents}) + F(\text{rivers})} \quad \text{Eq. 4}$$

138 Since the residence time of Th (decades) is much shorter than the transit time of deep ocean water masses  
139 (centuries to millennia), Th measured along GA03 likely has little preformed component. Thus, in  
140 considering water column inventories of Th, advective and/or diffusive sources can be neglected. Longer  
141 residence time elements, however, may have a substantial or even dominant preformed component. Thus,  
142 if  $F(AD)$  is a substantial flux for element Z, or similarly if  $F(\text{vents})$  is large compared to the Th-based  
143 supply, then the replacement time we calculate by Th-supply alone will overestimate the residence time.  
144 By making an area-weighted average of all the stations occupied on GA03, and assuming these stations  
145 represent the entire North Atlantic, the preformed supply of elements from North Atlantic water masses  
146 will be accounted for. Supply from outside the North Atlantic (e.g., Antarctic Bottom Water), however  
147 would still be unaccounted for. Furthermore, if our estimate of  $(Z/Th)_{\text{Input}}$  is higher or lower than the true  
148 value then our replacement times will underestimate or overestimate the residence time, respectively. In  
149 the case of using the Eq. 2b for input term, our estimate of either  $(Z/Th)_{\text{UCC}}$  or  $S_Z/S_{\text{Th}}$  could be biased  
150 higher or lower than the true value.

## 151 **2. Methods**

### 152 **2.1 Data sources**

153 We draw upon data from previous GA03 publications of dissolved  $^{230}\text{Th}$  (Hayes et al., 2015a), Fe  
154 (Conway and John, 2014a; Hatta et al., 2015), Zn (Conway and John, 2014b; Roshan and Wu, 2015a), Al  
155 (Measures et al., 2015), Mn (Wu et al., 2014), Cd (Conway and John, 2015; Wu and Roshan, 2015), Cu  
156 (Jacquot and Moffett, 2015; Roshan and Wu, 2015b), and Co (Noble et al., 2017). We also use data from  
157 leaching experiments performed on aerosol material collected during the cruise (Shelley et al., 2018).  
158 Data from this transect on  $^{232}\text{Th}$ , yttrium and the rare earth elements (REE) are presented here for the first  
159 time. Methods to determine dissolved  $^{232}\text{Th}$  were reported by Hayes et al. (2015a). Y and REE were  
160 determined by a combination of isotope dilution and external standard mass spectrometry and detailed  
161 methods are reported by Shiller (2016a). Full section views of the Y and REE concentration sections are  
162 available at <http://egeotraces.org>. All GA03 data are accessible through the Biological and Chemical

163 Oceanography Data Management Office (<http://data.bco->  
164 [dmo.org/jg/dir/BCO/GEOTRACES/NorthAtlanticTransect/](http://data.bco-dmo.org/jg/dir/BCO/GEOTRACES/NorthAtlanticTransect/)) or the GEOTRACES Data Products (Mawji  
165 et al., 2015).

## 166 *2.2 Rare earth element composition and solubility*

167 For calculating REE replacement times, using Eqs. 3 and 4, we define  $(\text{REE}/\text{Th})_{\text{UCC}}$  based on two  
168 sources (Table 1). A published synthesis (Rudnick and Gao, 2014) defines the average values for the  
169 upper continental crust and a GA03 aerosol study (Shelley et al., 2015) defines end-member elemental  
170 ratios of North African dust, likely a major source of Th and REEs to this section. Both of these estimates  
171 are used in our calculations as a way of taking into account uncertainty in the source material ratios. Most  
172 of the REE/Th ratios are similar (within 30%) for the two estimates, except notably for Gd, Tb, Tm and  
173 Lu. North African dust has a factor of 2 or more greater REE:Th ratio than the average UCC for these  
174 elements.

175 To define the relative fractional solubility of REEs to Th, we use results from aerosol leaching  
176 experiments of North African dust samples collected on GA03 (Shelley et al., 2018). Two types of  
177 leaches were performed on aerosol samples that were designed to represent a range in leaching intensity  
178 that continental particles experience under oceanic conditions: (1) an ultrapure (18.2 M $\Omega$ ) deionized  
179 water leach (DI leach) (Buck et al., 2006) and (2) a pH 2 leach consisting of 25% acetic acid and 0.02 M  
180 hydroxylamine hydrochloride with a 10 minute heating step at 90–95°C (Berger et al., 2008) (HAc leach).  
181 In general, absolute fractional solubility values defined by leaching experiments have been found to be  
182 highly sensitive to experimental conditions (Morton et al., 2013). In the present study, however, only the  
183 relative fractional solubility between an element and Th is used (Eq. 3), and relative fractional solubility  
184 may be less sensitive to leach method. For example, it was found that  $S_{\text{Th}}$  was an order of magnitude  
185 larger in the HAc leach compared to DI leach (Anderson et al., 2016), while REE fractional solubility  
186 relative to that of Th ( $S_{\text{REE}}/S_{\text{Th}}$ ) differ between the two leaches by less than 30% (except for Ce, for which  
187 the HAc leach gave a 40% higher value than the DI leach) (see Table 1). One previous study determined



188  $S_{\text{REE}}/S_{\text{Th}}$  for in-situ pumped lithogenic particles from the Mediterranean Sea for La, Ce, Pr, Nd, Gd, Dy,  
189 and Er, by incubating the filtered particles in seawater containing endemic bacteria under oxic conditions  
190 in the dark for several days (Arraes-Mescoff et al., 2001). This study found similar  $S_{\text{REE}}/S_{\text{Th}}$  values as  
191 those reported here, averaging  $3.8 \pm 1.7$  (avg.  $\pm$  1 s.d.,  $n = 11$ ) for all REEs studied, displaying no  
192 apparent trend with atomic number. Interestingly, the HAc leach values for  $S_{\text{REE}}/S_{\text{Th}}$  are consistently  
193 higher than those of the DI leach (Table 1). Here to account for the uncertainty in residence time  
194 estimates induced by different leaching techniques, we have used fractional solubility ratios from both the  
195 DI leach and HAc leach in calculations.

#### 196 ***2.4 Bioactive trace element composition and solubility***

197 For the bioactive elements considered here (Mn, Fe, Co, Cu, Zn, Cd) and Al, often used as an  
198 abiotic analogue for the scavenged-type trace metals, we also use both UCC and North African dust  
199 metal:Th ratios (Rudnick and Gao, 2014; Shelley et al., 2015) as a way to account for variability in source  
200 material (Table 2). These sets of ratios also are generally consistent with each other, except notably for Zn  
201 and Cd for which the North African dust metal:Th ratio is highly elevated compared to the UCC. We take  
202 this comparison with caution because it is possible the North African dust estimates may contain Zn  
203 and/or Cd contamination from co-occurring anthropogenic emissions (Grousset et al., 1995; Shelley et al.,  
204 2015). Furthermore, as discussed further below, for some of these elements, rivers are likely the dominant  
205 source, instead of dust, to the North Atlantic. While the element to Th ratios in global rivers has been  
206 estimated (Gaillardet et al., 2014) (Table 2), one could not use them to estimate riverine elemental supply  
207 without having a good constraint on the flux of Th from rivers alone. Additionally, element to Th ratios  
208 are likely modified in estuarine processes. Thus, we realize that making a replacement time estimate of  
209 river-supplied elements like Cd based on the sources that supply Th (dust and sediment dissolution) is  
210 apparently “mis-matched”. Nonetheless, the comparison of the apparent results for these types of  
211 elements to the elements with sources more similar to Th is still useful in demonstrating the relative range  
212 of possible replacement times in the ocean.

213 The relative solubility will again be a major source of uncertainty for the bioactive trace metals.  
214 There are few studies which determine the relative solubility of all the elements of interest here. In  
215 particular oceanic Th fractional solubility data is rather limited and ranges from about 1-29%, in  
216 published work (Anderson et al., 2016; Arraes-Mescoff et al., 2001; Hayes et al., 2017; Robinson et al.,  
217 2008; Rowland et al., 2017; Roy-Barman et al., 2002). Based on time-series measurements of Th and Fe  
218 at Station ALOHA (Hayes et al., 2015b), it is likely that  $S_{Fe}/S_{Th}$  is close to 1, but this may vary regionally  
219 and episodically. However, broadly consistent with that finding, DI and HAc leaches of the North African  
220 dust aerosols from GA03 produced  $S_{Fe}/S_{Th}$  estimates of  $0.4 \pm 0.2$  (n=2) and  $1.3 \pm 0.3$  (n=15), respectively.

221 Mn, Al and Co have either predominant or significant sources from atmospheric deposition to the  
222 North Atlantic basin (Measures et al., 2015; Noble et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2014). The DI leach results for  
223  $S_{Mn}/S_{Th}$  were very variable ( $3841 \pm 804$ , n = 2). Thus, here, we rely more heavily on the HAc leach for  
224  $S_{Mn}/S_{Th}$  ( $9.8 \pm 2.4$ , n = 7). DI and HAc leaches produced relative solubility ratios consistent with each  
225 other within uncertainty for Al ( $S_{Al}/S_{Th} \sim 2$ ) and Co ( $S_{Co}/S_{Th} \sim 6$ ).

226 As mentioned above, the sources of Cd, Cu and Zn are likely dominated by rivers (Little et al.,  
227 2015) and not atmospheric deposition. However, since we are defining replacement times with respect to  
228 the sources that supply Th, it is still appropriate to define the relative element to Th solubility in the  
229 sources that supply Th (namely, atmospheric deposition and sediment dissolution). The DI leach of  
230 Saharan aerosols for Zn/Th was highly uncertain ( $S_{Zn}/S_{Th} = 20 \pm 19$ , n = 2), while its HAc leach was  
231 better constrained ( $S_{Zn}/S_{Th} = 6.7 \pm 3.5$ , n = 7). Similarly, DI leaches for Cd/Th and Cu/Th were more  
232 variable but were consistent with the HAc leach within uncertainty ( $S_{Cd}/S_{Th} \sim 10$  and  $S_{Cu}/S_{Th} \sim 3$ ). Again  
233 if the Th-based supply of Cd, Cu and Zn underestimates the total supply of these elements (Eq. 4), the  
234 replacement times we derive will be overestimates of the residence time.

### 235 **3. Results**

#### 236 **3.1 <sup>232</sup>Th distribution, flux and sources**

237 The distribution of dissolved  $^{232}\text{Th}$  across the Woods Hole-Mauritania portion of GA03 is shown  
238 in Figure 1. Near the Mauritanian margin, dissolved  $^{232}\text{Th}$  concentrations are elevated throughout the  
239 water column due to North African dust deposition (Anderson et al., 2016) and, to some extent, due to  
240 input from margin sediments. The dissolved  $^{232}\text{Th}$  distribution has similarities with that of the isotopic  
241 composition of dissolved Fe ( $\delta^{56}\text{Fe}$ ; Fig. 1), indicative of a common source of these lithogenic metals. At  
242 the four easternmost stations, the dissolved Fe was characterized by lighter  $\delta^{56}\text{Fe}$  values (compared to the  
243 continental crust) throughout much of the water column. Conway and John [2014a] ascribed this signal to  
244 a mixing of Fe sources of roughly 80–90% dissolution from aerosol dust (with a hypothesized isotopically  
245 heavy signature (Conway and John, 2014a; John and Adkins, 2012) and 20–10% reducing margin  
246 sediments (with an isotopically light signature due to dissolved Fe(II) release from reducing porewaters  
247 (Severmann et al., 2006)). Because of Th's similar distribution in concentration space to  $\delta^{56}\text{Fe}$ , a similar  
248 balance of sources may exist for Th. Future work may be able to independently constrain a margin  
249 sediment source of Th using the potentially quantifiable source of  $^{228}\text{Ra}$  from the sediments (Charette et  
250 al., 2016).

251 Much of the deep Atlantic basin has a background dissolved  $^{232}\text{Th}$  concentration of 0.2–0.3  
252 pmol/kg, with a marked depletion around the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, a signal of intense Th scavenging  
253 (Hayes et al., 2015a) in waters impacted by hydrothermal plumes (indicated on Fig. 1 by a light excursion  
254 in dissolved  $\delta^{56}\text{Fe}$  from hydrothermal iron input). In the northwestern Atlantic, Upper Labrador Seawater,  
255 seen in the section plot around 1200 m depth from section distance 500 to 2000 km, is characterized by  
256 elevated  $^{232}\text{Th}$  (0.3-0.4 pmol/kg), and similarly traced by lighter (near-crustal) dissolved  $\delta^{56}\text{Fe}$  compared  
257 to the background basin (Fig. 1). In the case of Upper Labrador Seawater, Conway and John (2014a)  
258 ascribed the sources of dissolved Fe as 70-90% non-reductive sediment release and 30-10% aerosol dust.  
259 The seafloor sediments in the region of Labrador Seawater formation are of upper continental crust origin,  
260 and they may face leaching-type conditions even more intense than in the water column from sediment  
261 resuspension and burrowing activity (Aller and Aller, 1986). Thick nepheloid layers were seen in this

262 portion of the GA03 section (Lam et al., 2015). Thus,  $^{232}\text{Th}$  may be a general tracer for continental  
263 material in the ocean, whether leached from dust or seafloor sediments.

264 Finally, in the upper 500 m of the section between Woods Hole and Bermuda, elevated  $^{232}\text{Th}$  is  
265 seen in waters influenced by the Gulf Stream, consistent with previous observations off Cape Hatteras  
266 (36.1°N, 74.4°W) (Guo et al., 1995). In this case of the Gulf Stream, elevated  $^{232}\text{Th}$  concentrations appear  
267 de-coupled with changes in Fe isotopic composition in contrast to the rest of the section, likely because  
268 the Gulf Stream is carrying a signal from its source regions further south.

### 269 ***3.2 REE replacement times as proof of concept***

270 We begin with a focus on rare earth elements and yttrium (in this paper we include Y when using  
271 the abbreviation REE, sometimes abbreviated as YREE) because their ocean geochemical cycles may be  
272 similar to that of Th, with supply by upper continental crustal material (including dust, riverine particles  
273 or seafloor sediments) and removal by adsorption onto sinking particles, or scavenging (Elderfield, 1988).  
274 Additionally, REEs have generally decreasing particle-reactivity with increasing atomic number. This is  
275 related to their similar valence state (3+) and decreasing ionic size with increasing atomic number. REE  
276 scavenging in seawater has been studied in detail (Byrne and Kim, 1990; Quinn et al., 2004; Schijf et al.,  
277 2015), and a gross simplification can be made that increased ionic charge density for the heavier REEs  
278 means they are more strongly complexed in seawater by carbonate ions and thus less susceptible to  
279 scavenging. Anomalous to the overall trend, seawater has low Ce/REE ratios in comparison with the UCC  
280 since Ce can exist in either the 3+ or 4+ state, the latter being much more insoluble in seawater.

281 The calculated replacement times of the dissolved REEs are presented in cross-section form in  
282 Figure 2 using North African dust REE/Th composition and HAc leach solubility ratios. An area-  
283 weighted average across depth horizons was also calculated to represent the basin-wide North Atlantic  
284 replacement time (see Table 1 and Supporting Information for averaging method and tabulated data).  
285 Replacement times generally increase with integration depth and with atomic number from roughly 5 to

286 500 years. The extremes are Y, with the largest of the replacement times,  $580 \pm 90$  years for the whole  
287 North Atlantic (error representing uncertainty related to the compositional and solubility ratios), and Ce,  
288 being  $15 \pm 5$  years. We note that the derived dissolved Ce replacement time range is roughly half the  
289 residence time of dissolved Th, meaning Ce must be relatively intensely scavenged.

290 For most REEs the replacement time appears to increase with integration depth relatively  
291 abruptly in the deep eastern Atlantic basin below 4 km depth, compared with the western basin (Fig. 2).  
292 In investigating this pattern, it is worth noting that the Mid-Atlantic Ridge hydrothermal vents are not a  
293 source of REEs to the ocean and are actually a sink from scavenging onto hydrothermal particles (Stichel  
294 et al., 2018; Zheng et al., 2016). The apparent increase in replacement time in the deep eastern basin  
295 therefore may be explained by the presence of preformed REEs transported by Antarctic Bottom Water  
296 (AABW). It has been estimated that in the deep waters of GA03 about 20% of the dissolved Nd was  
297 added from local sources (dust or sediment dissolution), the other 80% being from preformed water  
298 masses (from both the North and South Atlantic) (Shiller, 2016b; Stichel et al., 2015). AABW is about  
299 1.7 times more concentrated in dissolved Nd than lower North Atlantic Deep Water (Zheng et al., 2016).  
300 With this information and the estimate that the deep portion of GA03 is 30% AABW (Jenkins et al.,  
301 2015a), about 25% of the deep Nd in GA03 may have originated from outside the North Atlantic.  
302 Assuming there is no preformed  $^{232}\text{Th}$  from AABW, the REE replacement times based on Th supply may  
303 overestimate the true North Atlantic residence time, by probably about 25%.

304 Nonetheless, the trend in replacement times across the spectrum of REEs is quite robust. Taking  
305 the basin-averaged replacement times at the 1 km integration depth level, to reduce the effect of  
306 preformed supply (although the full water column integration results also give a similar trend), REE  
307 replacement times follow a similar trend to REE ionic charge density (Rayner-Canham and Overton,  
308 2006) (Fig. 3). This is consistent with the simple prediction that at higher charge densities (i.e., heavier  
309 REEs), a greater fraction of REEs are complexed by carbonate ions, thus less susceptible to scavenging  
310 removal (with the exception of Ce). These results support the idea of inorganic complexation increasing

311 REE residence times in the ocean, which is predicted by thermodynamic treatments (Byrne and Kim,  
312 1990; Quinn et al., 2004; Schijf et al., 2015).

313 Figure 3 also shows the sensitivity of these replacement time estimates to the choice of  
314 compositional and solubility ratios. In particular, the lower Gd/Th ratio of the UCC results in a large  
315 positive anomaly in the replacement time estimate, whereas the estimates using the North African dust  
316 end-member fall in line with the atomic size trend, suggesting the North African dust end-member is a  
317 more relevant source in this area. This results suggests that anthropogenic Gd, sourced from its medical  
318 use as a contrast agent in magnetic resonance imaging, may have contaminated both North African dust  
319 and the adjacent Atlantic Ocean, as has been observed in the Mediterranean (Censi et al., 2010), the North  
320 Sea (Kulaksiz and Bau, 2007) and many other sites.

321 There have been prior REE ocean residence time estimates, most notably for Nd, for comparison  
322 with results reported here. Since the isotopic composition of dissolved Nd is a quasi-conservative tracer of  
323 water masses in the deep ocean (Tachikawa et al., 2017), it has been inferred that the ocean residence  
324 time of Nd must be shorter than the mixing time of the ocean (~1000 years). In our dataset, integrating the  
325 whole North Atlantic results in a Nd replacement time of  $110 \pm 20$  years (Table 1, Fig. 4), the uncertainty  
326 representing the variation in composition and solubility values chosen. This estimate is shorter than the  
327 Nd residence times (200-1000 years) calculated by comparing isotopic composition of particulate Nd with  
328 that of the surrounding seawater (Tachikawa et al., 1999). Note as well, as shown in Fig. 3, that if one  
329 only considers the upper 1 km, the dissolved Nd replacement time is about 25 years, which is likely  
330 shorter than the ventilation timescale of ~40 years (Jenkins et al., 2015b). This suggests Nd is unlikely to  
331 trace water mass properties in the upper 1 km of the ocean, in agreement with other studies (Tachikawa et  
332 al., 2017). Additionally, a recent Eastern Equatorial Pacific study found significant changes in dissolved  
333 Nd isotopic composition through the upper 2.5 km of the water column from station reoccupations  
334 separated by only 3 years (2009 and 2012), suggesting a very rapid turnover time (Grasse et al., 2017).

335 Another study made basin-scale estimates of REE residence times by comparing an estimate of  
336 the global seawater inventory with removal by sinking particles (Li, 1991). While these estimates are  
337 based on much less data available at the time, they are generally consistent with the lower end of the  
338 ranges we calculate using the Th-technique specific to the North Atlantic. More importantly, the trend in  
339 residence/replacement time is consistent (Table 1, Fig. 4). This also supports the notion that our  
340 replacement time estimates are somewhat overestimated due to lateral REE supply by AABW.  
341 Nonetheless, given the consistency in trend with atomic number and the absolute magnitude of the  
342 residence times, it appears that the Th-supply based replacement times are relatively well constrained.

### 343 *3.4 Prior residence time estimates of the bioactive trace elements*

344 In addition to REE, the Th flux-based replacement time approach can be used to estimate the  
345 replacement times of bioactive trace elements of interest to marine biogeochemical processes: Mn, Fe,  
346 Co, Cu, Zn, and Cd. We also consider dissolved Al residence times in GA03, since Al is often used as the  
347 abiotic analogue to the bioactive trace elements. All these elements are measured by GEOTRACES  
348 endeavors and are becoming the focus of biogeochemical modelling studies. While the geochemical  
349 cycles of these elements involve many biological transformations in which Th does not participate, their  
350 main source to the ocean is ultimately from upper continental crust, whether from dust, rivers,  
351 groundwater, or margin sediments, excluding hydrothermal inputs. Knowing this, we can proceed to  
352 estimate the replacement times of these elements in the same way as for REEs, while highlighting the  
353 extent to which this approach is limited. For instance, hydrothermal inputs of these elements will lead the  
354 replacement time based on Th supply to overestimate the residence time (since hydrothermal vents supply  
355 little Th to the ocean (Pavia et al., 2017). Additionally, as in the case of the REEs, the contribution of  
356 preformed elements in AABW may also result in our approach overestimating residence time.

357 Before discussing our new replacement time estimates, it makes sense to review the best existing  
358 estimates of the ocean residence times of these elements (Table 2). There has been much progress in  
359 understanding the magnitudes of various trace element sources and sinks. Current best-estimate residence

360 times for Zn, Cu, Cd, are 8,000–11,000 years (Little et al., 2016), 2,000–3,300 years (Little et al., 2017)  
361 and 26,000–55,000 years (Little et al., 2015), respectively, based on full oceanic mass balance  
362 calculations. These estimates are based on global sources and sinks, so we emphasize care taken in their  
363 comparison to the replacement times derived here, which are specific to the North Atlantic and do not  
364 necessarily include all relevant source fluxes. Bruland et al. (1994), deriving a residence time based on  
365 removal by sinking particles in the North Pacific, estimated a slightly shorter Zn residence time than the  
366 global residence time of Little et al. (2016) of 3,000–6,000 years. The Bruland et al. (1994) method  
367 produced a similar residence time estimate as Little et al., (2015) for Cd of 22,000–45,000 years. Finally,  
368 Roshan et al. (2016) also calculated a shorter Zn residence time ( $3000 \pm 600$  years) than Little et al.  
369 (2016), by adding recently observed hydrothermal sources of Zn to the sum of Zn sources compiled by  
370 Little et al. In contrast to these relatively long timescales, for Mn, Co and Al, the best available estimates  
371 are much shorter than the timescale of deep ocean circulation (20–40 years (Bruland et al., 1994), 40–130  
372 years (Hawco et al., 2017; Saito and Moffett, 2002), and 45–90 years (Bruland et al., 1994), respectively).  
373 These estimates are based on scavenging and particle sedimentation, likely the major removal mechanism  
374 for these elements.

375           Constraining the residence time of Fe is an obvious community priority because of Fe's  
376 influential role as a key micronutrient in biogeochemical cycles and its consequent role in limiting  
377 primary productivity over large regions of the ocean. Thus, understanding how quickly the supply of Fe  
378 changes with time is of great significance to the global carbon cycle. Despite this importance, the  
379 propensity for Fe to be contaminated during collection and analysis has historically led to challenges in  
380 ascertaining Fe concentrations accurately. However, after accruing a larger dataset of uncontaminated Fe  
381 analyses, two groups initially developed deep ocean Fe residence time estimates based on the scavenging  
382 rates of Fe in deep waters (70–140 years in the deep Pacific (Bruland et al., 1994) and 130–410 years in  
383 the deep Atlantic (Bergquist and Boyle, 2006)).



384 More recently, Hayes et al. [2015c] used the Th supply-based approach described in this study to  
385 estimate a deep Pacific Fe residence time near Hawaii of about 30 years. Because of the disagreement  
386 with the century-scale residence time estimates, those authors hypothesized that Th supply could  
387 somehow be decoupled from Fe supply in the deep ocean, resulting in a significant overestimation of the  
388 Fe supply and a residence time estimate that is too low. Recent results from modelling studies, however,  
389 are providing some support for the notion that the residence time of Fe may be decadal rather than  
390 centennial, or could vary significantly between basins and with different Fe speciation. In the  
391 intercomparison of global ocean iron models, 5 of the 13 models recently examined in a review by  
392 Tagliabue et al. [2016] gave global Fe residence times of less than 10 years, and 8 gave less than 50 years  
393 (average and standard deviation:  $145 \pm 176$  years). Furthermore, Kipp et al. [2017] estimated a residence  
394 time of dissolved Fe in the hydrothermal plume emanating from the East Pacific Rise at 2.4 km depth of  
395 9–20 years, based on scavenging rates of Fe in the plume. Thus, while each of these residence time  
396 estimates differs somewhat in their approach to defining a residence time, it is clear that there remains  
397 significant uncertainty in the residence time of Fe in the ocean.

398 The replacement times we derive here are specific to the North Atlantic, omit key sources such as  
399 hydrothermal vents and rivers, and are not necessarily representative of a steady-state situation. Our  
400 comparison of replacement times to globally or regionally defined residence times in the literature is thus  
401 not meant to be strictly quantitative.

### 402 ***3.5 Replacement times of the bioactive trace elements estimated with the Th-based approach***

403 Here, we estimate replacement times for the bioactive elements using the Th-based approach on  
404 the GA03 dataset, with results shown for Fe, Mn, Al, Co, Zn, Cu and Cd in Figs. 5, 6 and Table 2. The  
405 overall range in replacement times of the bioactive elements estimated here for the whole North Atlantic  
406 are for the most part consistent with the range of previous residence time estimates (Fig. 5). North  
407 Atlantic Zn, Cd and Cu replacement times are close to or longer than the ocean mixing time (>1000  
408 years), while those of Fe, Mn, Co and Al are significantly shorter, decadal or less. Figure 6 shows section

409 views of the replacement time estimates using UCC composition and HAc leach solubility ratios and  
410 Figure 7 shows the area-weighted average depth profile of the North Atlantic replacement times. The  
411 errors reported in Fig. 5, 7 and Table 2 take into account uncertainty in the composition and solubility  
412 ratios by comparison with results of the calculation using North African dust and DI leach information.  
413 Uncertainty related to AABW supply or other “missing” terms in the steady-state budget are not  
414 accounted for.

### 415 *3.6 Upper water column replacement times of the bioactive trace elements*

416 While the focus of this manuscript is North Atlantic basin-scale replacement times, the Th-supply  
417 method can be used at any integration depth and may indeed be quite useful in interpreting bioactive trace  
418 element behavior in the euphotic zone, as shown in the shallow portions of the section plots of Fig. 7.  
419 These estimates, expanded for more detail in the upper 1 km m are presented with limited discussion in  
420 the Supporting Information for Fe, Mn, Al, Cu, Zn, Cd and Co. In the upper water column, especially for  
421 elements with short residence times, rivers and preformed elements are much less likely to be significant  
422 contributors to the measured inventories. Therefore, in the upper ocean the Th-based approach may give a  
423 more reliable estimate of element replacement time specifically by dissolution of dust, as has been argued  
424 for Fe (Hayes et al., 2015b). On the other hand, in considering the upper ocean alone, another potential  
425 source of elements may need to be considered, which is the upwelling of water with Z/Th ratios distinct  
426 from dust. A significant upwelling source may be limited to upwelling regions such as the Mauritanian  
427 margin, and thus basin-wide averaging is likely to reduce the bias introduced.

428 Lastly, with available GEOTRACES data, we can make both upper ocean and deep ocean  
429 replacement time estimates for Sc, V, Ni, Ga, and Ba. These estimates are also given in the Supporting  
430 Information.

## 431 **4. Discussion**

432 Our North Atlantic Fe replacement time of  $6 \pm 3$  years is more similar to previous decadal or  
433 shorter estimates of residence time (Hayes et al., 2015b; Kipp et al., 2017; Tagliabue et al., 2016) than the  
434 century-scale estimates (Bergquist and Boyle, 2006; Bruland et al., 1994). In making these comparisons,  
435 it is worth noting that our Th-based Fe replacement time could underestimate the residence time if the  
436 true value of  $S_{Fe}/S_{Th}$  is less than  $\sim 0.5$ – $1.3$ . However, the true  $S_{Fe}/S_{Th}$  value would have to be less than 0.05  
437 to produce a century-length dissolved Fe replacement time. Of course, different regions of the ocean are  
438 likely to be characterized by different effective relative solubility ratios because of different chemical  
439 conditions or distinct sources (Fig. 1). For instance, Fe could be much more effectively leached from dust  
440 than Th in surface waters due to biological activity, photoactivity, easily-weathered surface oxide  
441 coating, and/or ligand influences. In contrast, in abyssal waters, Th could continue to be leached where  
442 there is less Fe released (thus  $S_{Fe}/S_{Th}$  could be higher in surface waters and lower in deep waters).  
443 Different organic ligands and ambient conditions could also play a role. Such water-column variability is  
444 not considered in our calculation here; however, the relative solubility number represents the integrated  
445 dissolution of both elements throughout the water column, whatever the depth profile of relative solubility  
446 might look like. The true integrated  $S_{Fe}/S_{Th}$  would thus again need to be quite low to produce a centennial  
447 replacement time in this case.

448 The very short North Atlantic replacement time for Mn ( $5 \pm 1$  years) implies rapid removal by  
449 processes such as biological uptake, oxidation and/or particle scavenging. Nonetheless, if the true  $S_{Mn}/S_{Th}$   
450 value were less than  $\sim 10$  as used here, our replacement time estimates would increase, perhaps to be more  
451 in line with the previous residence time estimate of 20-40 years (Table 2). It might be that in leaching  
452 experiments, relative Mn/Th solubility is greater than what would occur in situ in the ocean. Further  
453 investigation into how relative solubility ratios change in different leaching methods may shed light on  
454 this issue.

455 The North Atlantic replacement time for Co in this analysis ( $140 \pm 70$  years) is similar to the best  
456 previous residence time estimates (Hawco et al., 2017; Saito and Moffett, 2002). Additionally, Al has a

457 deep ocean replacement time of  $50 \pm 10$  years, again broadly consistent with previous residence time  
458 estimates (Bruland et al., 1994; Chester and Jickells, 2012) and being slightly longer than the residence  
459 time of Th, also expected based on previous work (e.g., (Moran and Moore, 1989)). The mid-ocean ridge  
460 in the vicinity of GA03 may be a source of Al, either from hydrothermal input (Measures et al., 2015) or  
461 sediment dissolution on the flanks of the ridge (Middag et al., 2015), and either source would contribute  
462 to our replacement time overestimating the true residence time here.

463         The hydrothermal plume at the GA03 Mid-Atlantic Ridge is clearly a large source of Fe and Mn  
464 (Conway and John, 2014a; Hatta et al., 2015) which would not be accounted for by Th-based estimates of  
465 Fe and Mn supply. The Th-based dissolved Fe flux at the depth of the hydrothermal plume in GA03 is  
466 about  $640 \mu\text{mol}/\text{m}^2/\text{yr}$ . The Th-based dissolved Fe replacement time rises to 30 years in the plume,  
467 compared to 5 years at the same depth in surrounding stations (Fig. 6). In the basin-averaged data (Fig. 7),  
468 the full magnitude of this anomaly is partly averaged out, but an increase at the depth of the ridge crest  
469 ( $\sim 3500$  m) is still apparent. If the overall Fe residence time should be 5 (rather than 30) years in the deep  
470 North Atlantic, then the Fe flux at the ridge site would have to be six times larger than the Th-based  
471 estimate, implying about  $3200 \mu\text{mol}/\text{m}^2/\text{yr}$  of hydrothermal Fe being added (see Eq. 4). This is much  
472 higher than our current best estimates of the hydrothermal Fe flux,  $100 \mu\text{mol}/\text{m}^2/\text{yr}$  in the Atlantic and  
473  $300 \mu\text{mol}/\text{m}^2/\text{yr}$  in the Pacific (Tagliabue et al., 2010). In one sense, this finding offers support for the  
474 idea that the hydrothermal Fe flux from the Atlantic mid-ocean ridge is higher than would be expected  
475 based on its relatively slow spreading rate (Saito et al., 2013). On the other hand, the observation that  
476 dissolved Fe is transported in the deep ocean 4000 km away from a large source in the East Pacific Rise  
477 (Fitzsimmons et al., 2014; Resing et al., 2015) suggests that the hydrothermal Fe must remain in the deep  
478 ocean longer than a few years. However, this behavior may be ridge- or even vent-specific, depending on  
479 ambient conditions and vent chemistry, such as the presence of  $\text{H}_2\text{S}$ .

480         One explanation for the persistence of Fe in deep water in the Pacific invokes stabilization by  
481 colloids and/or ligands (Fitzsimmons et al., 2017, 2016) which may also have an origin in the

482 hydrothermal plumes, and which may not apply to lithogenic Fe from other sources. Thus, if Fe  
483 speciation or organic ligands are contributing to an apparently longer residence time in the plume  
484 measured in the GA03 section, the estimated hydrothermal Fe flux would not be as drastically high as  
485 calculated above. When Th and Fe data from the GEOTRACES program become available for other mid-  
486 ocean ridges in the Pacific, Arctic and Indian Oceans, we may gain more insight into how apparent  
487 anomalies in Th-supply-based Fe replacement times can be used to constrain hydrothermal Fe fluxes.

488         Similarly, the Th-based dissolved Mn flux is roughly  $125 \mu\text{mol}/\text{m}^2/\text{yr}$  at the deep ridge site, while  
489 the Th-based replacement time there is 40 years (Fig. 6) rather than the 5 year replacement time of the  
490 basin-wide average (Fig. 7), implying a factor of 8 increased Mn flux (an additional  $875 \mu\text{mol}/\text{m}^2/\text{yr}$  Mn  
491 flux from hydrothermal sources) to bring the replacement time estimate in line with the deep ocean  
492 average. Current estimates put the hydrothermal Mn flux at  $10\text{--}20 \mu\text{mol}/\text{m}^2/\text{yr}$  along the ridge (van  
493 Hulten et al., 2017). Thus, either the Th-based replacement times imply a much higher hydrothermal Mn  
494 flux than is currently assumed, or again perhaps the residence time of Mn increases in the deep ocean near  
495 ridges due to stabilizing ligands of hydrothermal origin (Sander and Koschinsky, 2011), similar to Fe.

496         The millennial-scale replacement time of dissolved Zn estimated here ( $1100 \pm 600$  yrs) is short  
497 compared to the most recent residence estimates, 3,000–11,000 yrs (Bruland et al., 1994; Little et al.,  
498 2016; Roshan et al., 2016), but at least similar in order of magnitude, given the uncertainties involved.  
499 Additionally, Zn concentrations increase in the deep ocean along the conveyor circulation from the North  
500 Atlantic to the North Pacific by about a factor of 5 (Bruland et al., 2014). Thus, if calculated with a given  
501 Zn supply, one would expect a replacement time estimate to increase from the North Atlantic to the North  
502 Pacific or global ocean. Interestingly, the mid-ocean ridge does not appear to be a great source of Zn in  
503 the Atlantic (Roshan and Wu, 2015a), but it does in the Pacific and has been hypothesized to be an  
504 important global source (Roshan et al., 2016). This Zn source would clearly not be accounted for by Th  
505 supply, but this would mean our  $\sim 1,000$  year replacement time estimate would overestimate the residence  
506 time due to not including a hydrothermal flux.

507 The other bioactive elements largely supplied by rivers, Cd and Cu, yielded replacement time  
508 estimates similar to previous estimates (Table 2) (Bruland et al., 1994; Little et al., 2017, 2015), though  
509 the estimates here have large uncertainties related to composition and solubility assumptions. For  
510 instance, using UCC composition and HAc leach solubility, the deep ocean replacement time of dissolved  
511 Cd averages 180,000 years (Fig. 6), but if we use North African dust composition and DI leach solubility,  
512 this estimate drops by 2 orders of magnitude to 1,800 years. As mentioned above, because the North  
513 African dust end-member may be contaminated by anthropogenic Cd, we take the average of the two  
514 possible estimates using the UCC composition (with DI leach and HAc leach) for the average North  
515 Atlantic Cd replacement time (180,000 and 33,000 years, average and standard deviation being  $106,000 \pm$   
516  $103,000$  years). This large uncertainty highlights the difficulty presented by predicting the replacement  
517 time of a mostly river-supplied element like Cd with a mostly dust-supplied element like Th.

518 In the case of Cu, uncertainty in both composition and solubility ratio lead to a fairly large range  
519 in replacement time estimates ( $5,200 \pm 1400$  years) with little reason to discount any of the parameters  
520 used. The geographical structure of the replacement time estimates (Figure 6) of Zn, Cd, and Cu is similar  
521 to those of the REEs, yielding increasing replacement times in the deep eastern Atlantic basin. It is likely  
522 that all of these elements have some supply from AABW into the North Atlantic (Conway and John,  
523 2015, 2014b; Jacquot and Moffett, 2015; Roshan and Wu, 2015a, 2015b; Wu and Roshan, 2015). While  
524 the assumption of Th supply being a good analogue for the supply of other elements may be appropriate  
525 for some elements, it seems most tenuous for Zn, Cd and Cu. Nonetheless, our results at least agree with  
526 previous assessments that these elements have residence times similar to or longer than the timescale of  
527 ocean mixing ( $\sim 1000$  years).

## 528 **5. Conclusion**

529 Extrapolating the Th cycle to other elements in the periodic table has proved useful in assessing  
530 the range of trace element reactivity exhibited along the GA03 section in the North Atlantic and has  
531 potential applicability to the global ocean. Proof of concept for this method is demonstrated from Th-

532 based replacement times of the rare earth elements that follow known patterns of scavenging intensity.  
533 Among the bioactive elements, the evidence presented here suggests that the dissolved Fe residence time  
534 in the North Atlantic is decadal rather than centennial, and Fe and Mn may have the shortest residence  
535 times of all the elements in the ocean. Our Th-derived replacement time estimates for Zn, Cd, Cu, Co and  
536 Al largely agree with the best available estimates. Chief among the uncertainties associated with Th-  
537 based replacement times for the bioactive elements is how to define an appropriate source composition  
538 and relative solubility. Alternatively, if input ratios of specific sources (e.g., groundwater, modified  
539 estuarine water, or anthropogenically-contaminated water) could be better defined, a more complete  
540 assessment of trace element sources can be defined. The relatively simple Th-based replacement time  
541 method presented here can inform biogeochemical modelling of all trace elements and may be  
542 particularly useful for constraining the extremely rapidly cycled bioactive elements, Fe and Mn.

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557 dmo.org/jg/dir/BCO/GEOTRACES/NorthAtlanticTransect/](http://data.bco-dmo.org/jg/dir/BCO/GEOTRACES/NorthAtlanticTransect/)). Basin-averaged North Atlantic data are  
558 available in the Supporting Information.

#### 559 **Figure and Table Captions**

560 **Figure 1.** (Top) Dissolved  $^{232}\text{Th}$  distribution along the east-west transect of GA03. (Middle) The stable  
561 isotopic composition of dissolved Fe ( $\delta^{56}\text{Fe}$ ) (Conway and John, 2014). Note the inverted scale on  
562 isotopic values. (Bottom) The dissolved  $^{232}\text{Th}$  flux as a function of integration depth. The inset map on the  
563 bottom right shows the GA03 cruise tracks (blue) and the section plotted here (red).

564 **Figure 2.** Replacement times of dissolved REEs (Y, La, Nd, Sm, Eu, Gd, Dy, Ho, Er, Yb and La shown  
565 here; Pr, Tb and Tm not shown for brevity) as a function of integrated depth across the GA03 transect  
566 (small inset map). These replacement times are calculated with respect to supply based on dissolved

567 <sup>232</sup>Th, assuming North African dust composition and HAc leach solubility ratios. The three plots in the  
568 top row are all on different colorbar scales. All plots in the bottom row use the same colorbar scale.

569 **Figure 3.** Average REE replacement times for the upper 1 km over the entire GA03 transect compared  
570 with ionic charge density of the same element. All elements were assumed to be trivalent cations, with the  
571 exception of Ce, for which the charge density of the tetravalent cation is shown. The grayscale curves  
572 represent the range of residence time estimates produced using different assumption for source material  
573 (upper continental crust, UCC, or North African aerosol samples, Dust) and relative fractional solubility  
574 of the REE to Th (defined using either a deionized water, DI, leach or a mild acetic acid solution, HAc,  
575 leach of North African dust aerosol samples).

576 **Figure 4.** Rare earth element ocean replacement times based on Th supply, averaged for the whole North  
577 Atlantic Basin in this study versus the residence times estimated by Li (1991) based on removal by  
578 sedimentation. The y-axis error bars reflect uncertainty in the REE/Th composition of source material and  
579 the relative solubility ratio. The dotted line is the 1-to-1 line.

580 **Figure 5.** Replacement times for the bioactive elements from this study (whole North Atlantic average)  
581 compared with the best available residence time estimates from previous studies. The error bars on the  
582 GA03 data represent uncertainty associated with crustal composition and solubility. The dotted line at  
583 1000 years represents roughly the division of elements whose residence time is longer (Zn, Cu, Cd) or  
584 shorter (Fe, Mn, Al, Co) than the mixing time of the ocean.

585 **Figure 6.** Replacement times of dissolved Fe, Zn, Mn, Cd, Cu, Co and Al with respect to supply based on  
586 dissolved <sup>232</sup>Th input, assumed composition of the upper continental crust (Rudnick and Gao, 2014) and  
587 solubility ratios defined by mild acetic acid leaches of GA03 North African aerosols. The range in deep  
588 ocean (4 km) residence time estimates for these elements reported in Table 2 reflect uncertainty in source  
589 composition and solubility.

590 **Figure 7.** Trace element replacement times with respect to supply based on <sup>232</sup>Th supply. These profiles  
591 represent replacement times as a function of integration depth. To make a basin-wide average, the GA03  
592 station profiles were averaged in depth bins on an area-weighted basis. The error bars represent the  
593 uncertainty in values used for the composition of the source (UCC or Saharan dust) and the relative  
594 solubility ratio (DI leach or HAc leach). For Mn, Zn and Cu, the solubility ratio defined by the HAc leach  
595 was used as the relative solubility from the DI leach for these elements was highly uncertain (see Table  
596 2). Note that the Cd error bars nearly overlap with zero.

597 **Table 1.** REE/Th ratios of the average upper continental crust (Rudnick and Gao, 2014) and North  
598 African dust (Shelley et al., 2015), and deep ocean residence time estimates made here (see Sec. 3.3, and  
599 Eqs. 1–4) compared with whole ocean residence times based on deep sea sedimentation removal (Li,  
600 1991). The fractional solubility ratios ( $S_{\text{REE}}/S_{\text{Th}}$ ) are derived from leaching experiments of North African  
601 dust aerosols collected on GA03 using either deionized water (DI) or a weak acetic acid-type leach  
602 (HAc). Note that only 2 significant figures are shown here for brevity, but at least 3 significant figures  
603 were used in calculations.

604 **Table 2.** Upper continental crustal elemental ratios, relative solubility based on leaching experiments of  
605 North African dust aerosols from GA03, using a deionized water (DI) or a weak acetic acid-type leach  
606 (HAc), deep ocean (4 km) residence times based on this study (see Sec. 3.4 and Eqs. 1–4), and other  
607 published estimates of deep ocean residence times. Residence time estimates are denoted by the flux with  
608 respect to (w.r.t.) which they are based. Values are limited to a maximum of 3 significant figures here.

609

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863

Fig 1.



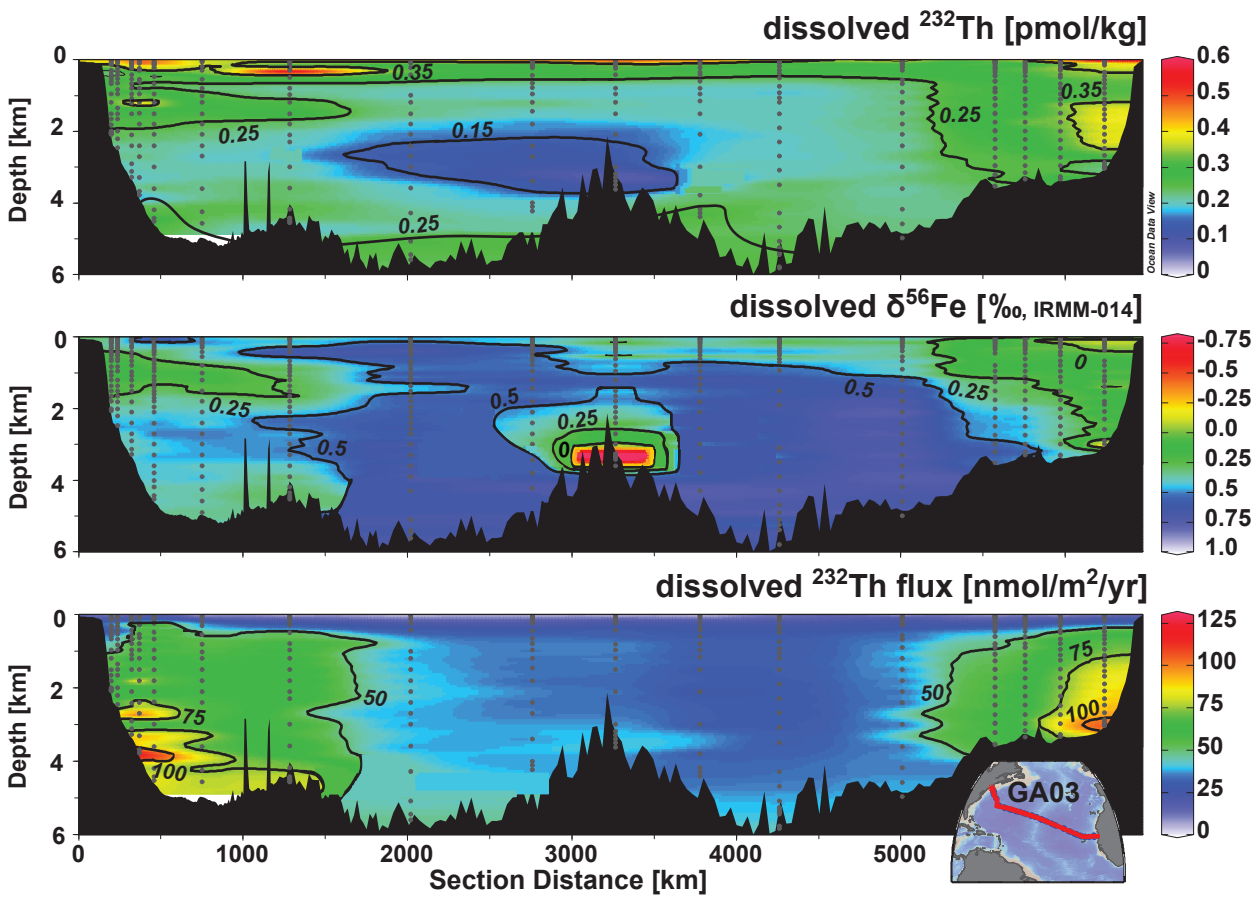


Fig 2.

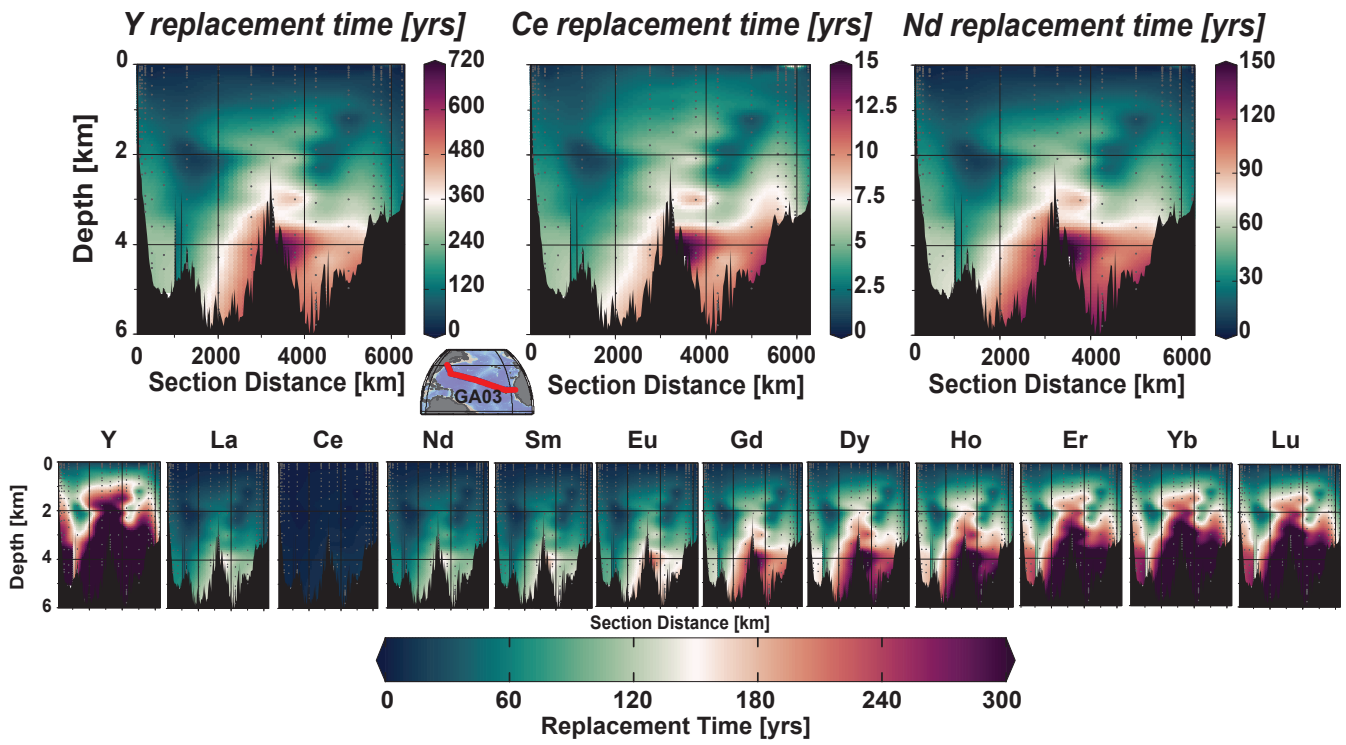


Fig 3.

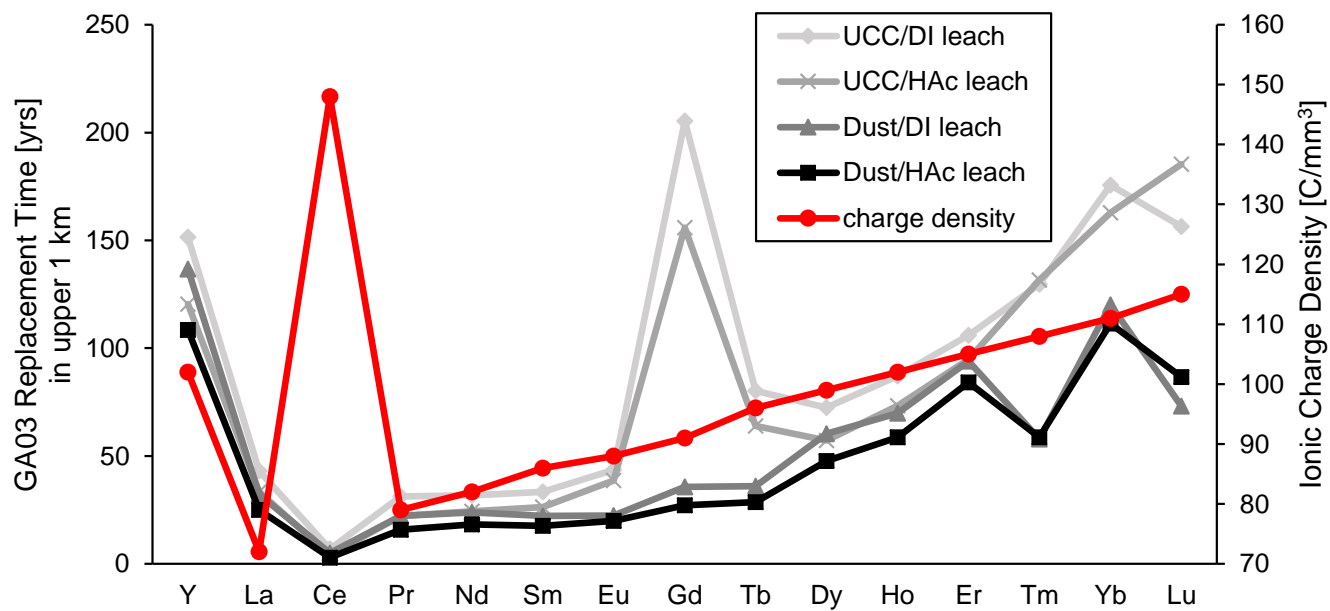


Fig 4.

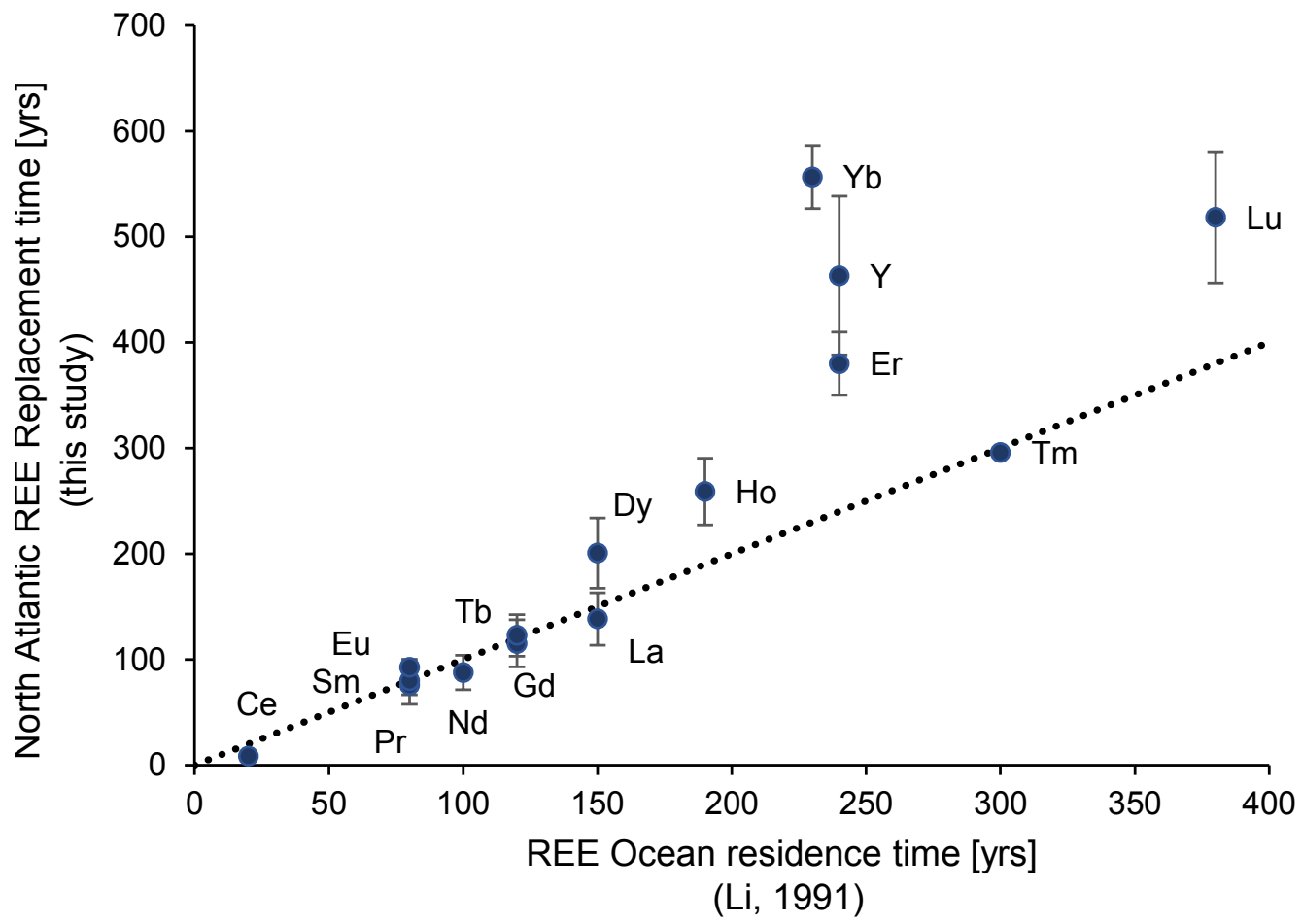


Fig 5.



North Atlantic (GA03) Replacement Times compared to other Residence Time Estimates (years)

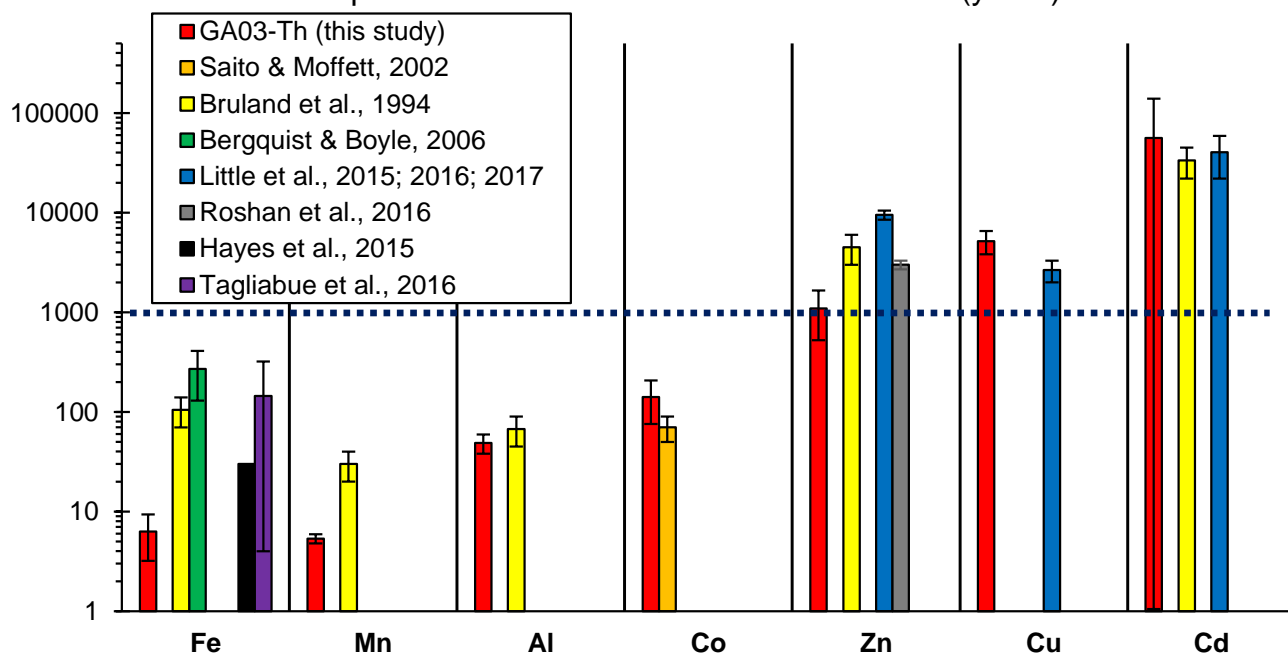


Fig 6.

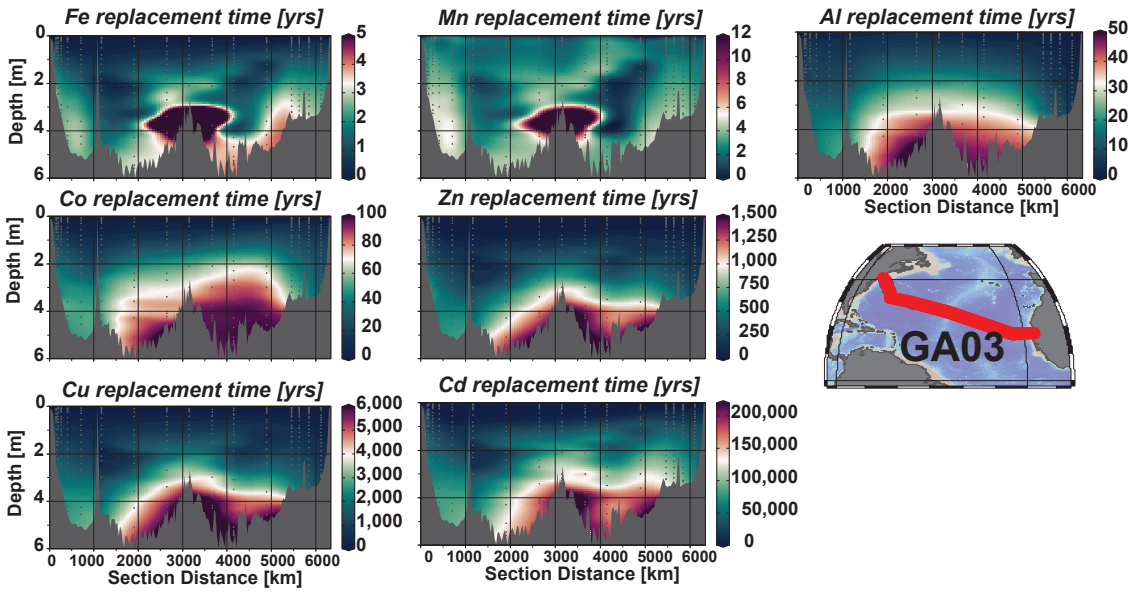
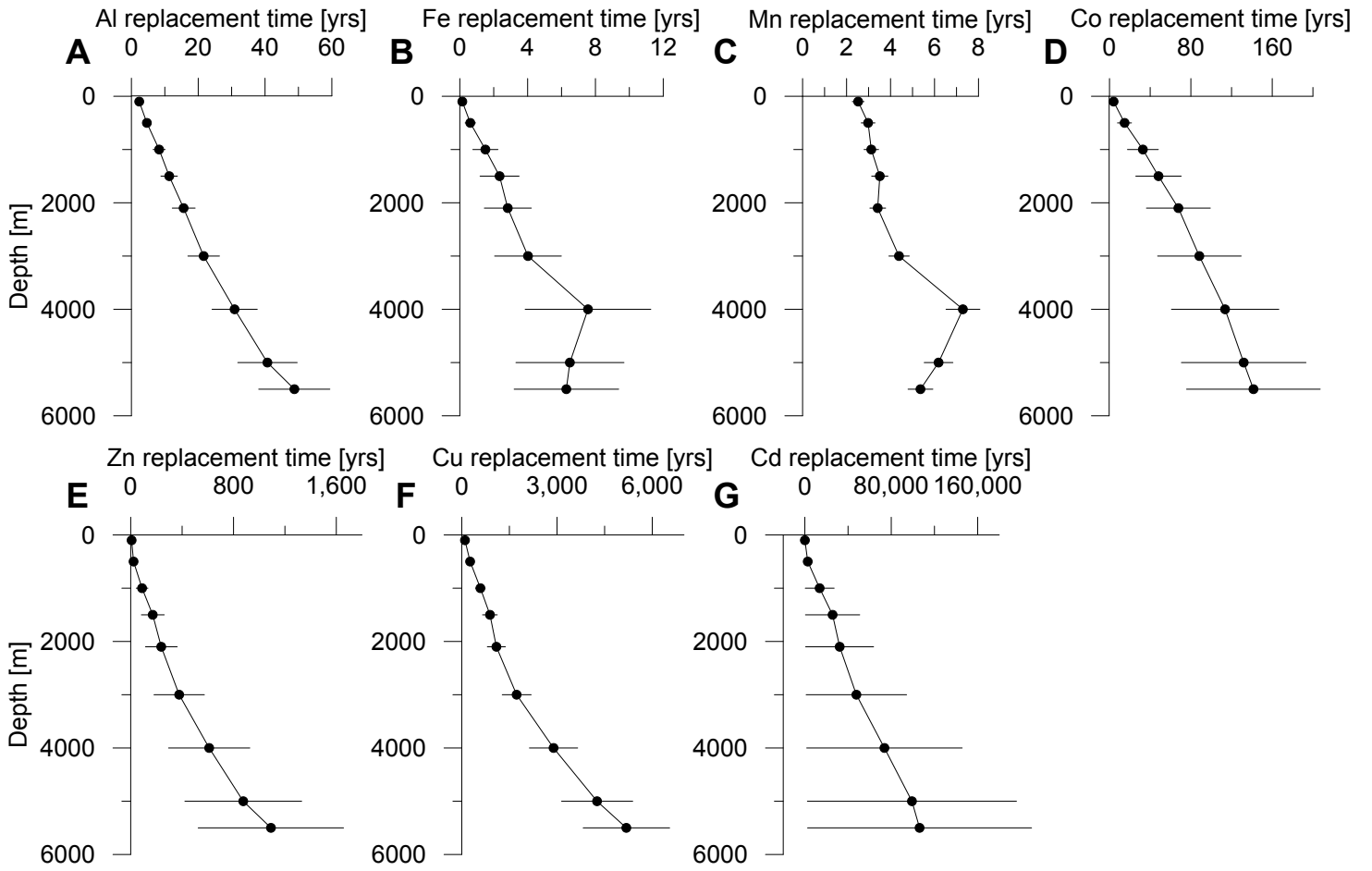


Fig 7.

# North Atlantic Replacement Times (GA03)



**Table 1.** REE/Th ratios of the average upper continental crust (Rudnick and Gao, 2014) and North African dust (Shelley et al., 2015), and deep ocean residence time estimates made here (see Sec. 3.3, and Eqs. 1–4) compared with whole ocean residence times based on deep sea sedimentation removal (Li, 1991). The fractional solubility ratios ( $S_{\text{REE}}/S_{\text{Th}}$ ) are derived from leaching experiments of North African dust aerosols collected on GA03 using either deionized water (DI) or a weak acetic acid-type leach (HAc). Note that only 2 significant figures are shown here for brevity, but at least 3 significant figures were used in calculations.

REE:	Y	La	Ce	Pr	Nd	Sm	Eu	Gd	Tb	Dy	Ho	Er	Tm	Yb	Lu
<b>REE/Th UCC [mol/mol]</b>	5.2	4.9	9.9	1.1	4.1	0.69	0.15	0.56	0.10	0.53	0.11	0.30	0.039	0.25	0.039
<b>REE/Th North African [mol/mol]</b>	5.8	6.6	14	1.6	5.6	1.0	0.28	3.2	0.22	0.64	0.14	0.34	0.088	0.37	0.084
<b><math>S_{\text{REE}}/S_{\text{Th}}</math> DI leach</b>	3.8	2.1	2.2	2.4	3.1	3.6	3.5	1.0	2.2	3.6	3.3	3.6	2.8	2.3	2.4
<b><math>S_{\text{REE}}/S_{\text{Th}}</math> HAc leach</b>	4.8	2.7	3.8	3.4	4.1	4.5	3.9	1.4	2.7	4.5	3.8	4.0	2.8	2.5	2.1
<b>North Atlantic replacement time [yrs]</b>	580 ±90	180 ±30	15 ±6	110 ±30	110 ±20	100 ±20	100 ±10	150 ±30	150 ±30	250 ±40	310 ±40	420 ±30	290 ±3	600 ±30	440 ±50
<b>Whole Ocean Residence Time (Li, 1991) [yrs]</b>	240	150	20	80	100	80	80	120	120	150	190	240	300	230	380



**Replacement times of a spectrum of elements in the North Atlantic based on thorium supply**

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Also included in supplemental files:  
Supplementary Data (.xls)

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## Supplementary Text

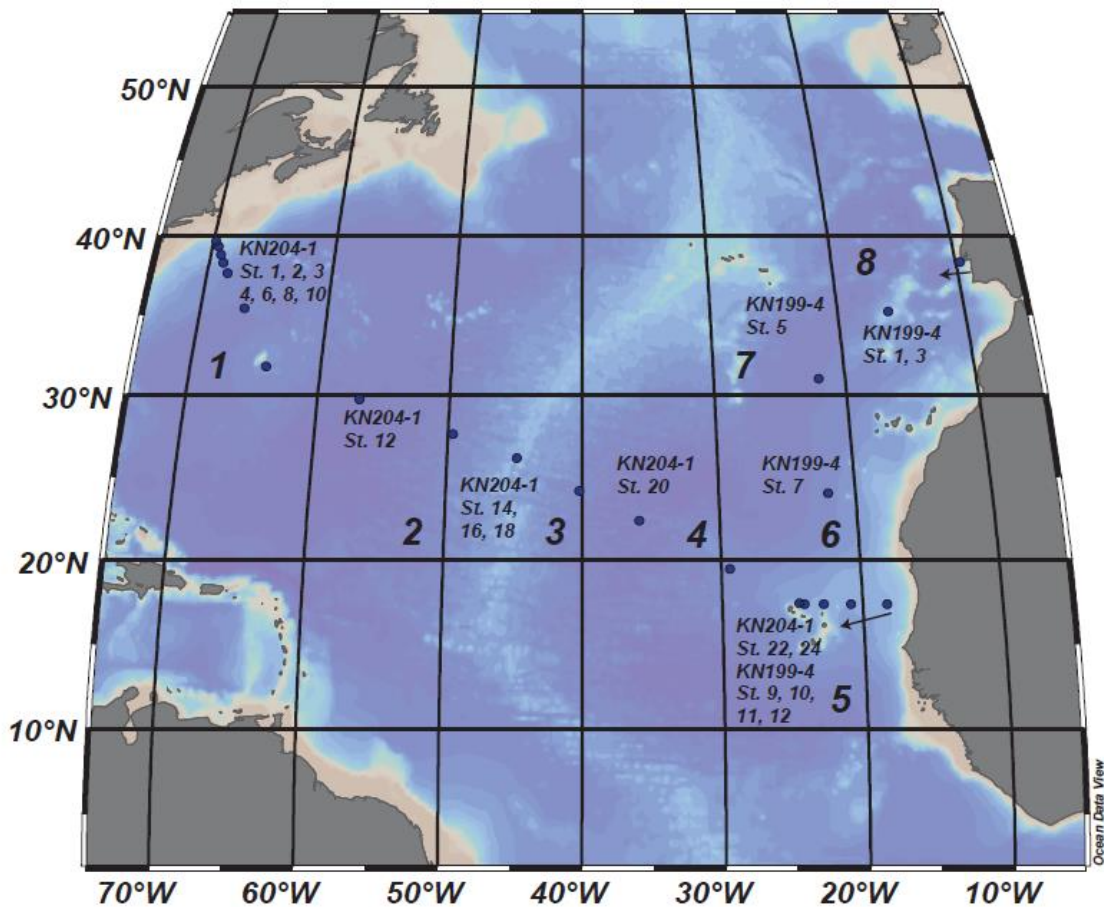
This file contains additional results of the replacement time calculations based on dissolved  $^{232}\text{Th}$  flux for which space in the main text did not allow discussion. In Figure S1, we show how replacement time estimates were averaged to derive a basin-wide North Atlantic average. In Figure S2, the same replacement time estimates as plotted in Figure 7 of the main text (North Atlantic basin-wide averages), but zoomed in on the upper 1000 m, to examine the replacement time results in the environment of significant biological uptake. The shortest replacement time in the upper 100 m of the bioactive elements considered is Fe, about 1–2 months. This is roughly 5 times shorter than the same estimate made at the Hawaii Ocean Time series station (Hayes et al., 2015) in the North Pacific. This implies either: (1) very rapid biological removal since the input of Fe to the North Atlantic is much greater than in the North Pacific (Hayes et al., 2017) or (2) more efficient biological retention of Fe in the Fe-poor North Pacific (Raftar et al., 2017). Zinc, cobalt, and manganese all have dissolved replacement times less than 6 years in the upper 100 m, also indicating quite rapid turnover. Dissolved Al has a replacement time of about  $2.3 \pm 0.5$  years in the upper 100 m, shorter than with the usual assumption of a 5 years residence time in the mixed layer (Measures and Brown, 1996). Copper and cadmium have much longer replacement times in the upper 100 m (80–90 years), perhaps surprisingly given their role as micronutrients. Of course, as discussed in the main text, there are large uncertainties with respect to source composition and relative solubility especially for these elements.

In figures S3 and S4, we show replacement time calculations for other elements of geochemical interest, for which data are available in the GAO<sub>3</sub> data product: Sc, V, Ni, Ga, and Ba. Sections plots are shown in Figure S3 and the North Atlantic averages in Figure S4. For these estimates we have used the assumption of upper continental crustal source (Rudnick and Gao, 2014) and any available data from the DI leaches (Shelley et al., 2018) (see Table S1). Based on enrichment factor analyses, North African dust is contaminated with anthropogenic V and Ni (Shelley et al., 2015; Trapp et al., 2010). This potentially leads the V/Th and Ni/Th solubility ratios (reported in Table S1) being elevated over natural inputs and thus may lead to our replacement time estimates for V and Ni being underestimates of the residence time. Available leach data for Sc and Ga was minimal, so we made a basic assumption of similar fractional solubility to Th for Sc ( $S_{\text{Sc}}/S_{\text{Th}} = 1$ ) since this is a highly scavenged element (Parker et al., 2016) and greater solubility for Ga than Th ( $S_{\text{Ga}}/S_{\text{Th}} = 5$ ) since this element is scavenged less intensely than Al (Shiller and Bairamadgi, 2006) and thus likely much less intensely than Th. Deep ocean estimates indicate Sc and Ga are relatively short-lived, with 5 km replacement times of about 160 years or less, and both elements may be good analogues for lithogenic, scavenged elements like thorium. Barium and nickel have intermediate length replacement times (5 km replacement times of about 5,000 years), which indicates their role in biological cycles. Consistent with the Th-based result, whole ocean Ba replacement time is estimated as about 10,000 years (Chan et al., 1976). The deep ocean replacement time of dissolved vanadium is about 15,000 years, much longer than deep ocean mixing timescales, indicative of its role as a quasi-conservative oxyanion species.

In the upper 100 m, Sc and Ga replacement times are relatively short, roughly 10 years for both elements. Till et al. [2017] recently independently assessed the upper water column residence time of Sc as  $5.6 \pm 3.2$  years near Bermuda, grossly consistent with the Th-based one, or perhaps suggesting the Sc/Th relative solubility may be somewhat greater than 1, which would have reduced the Th-based estimate. The Ga replacement time is roughly consistent with the decadal-scale residence time inferred for this element in the North Atlantic (Shiller, 1998). The surface ocean Ba residence time of ~200 years is longer than the ~25 years estimated by Lea and Boyle [1991]. We are not aware of a good basis for comparison for the surface water replacement time estimates of V or Ni.

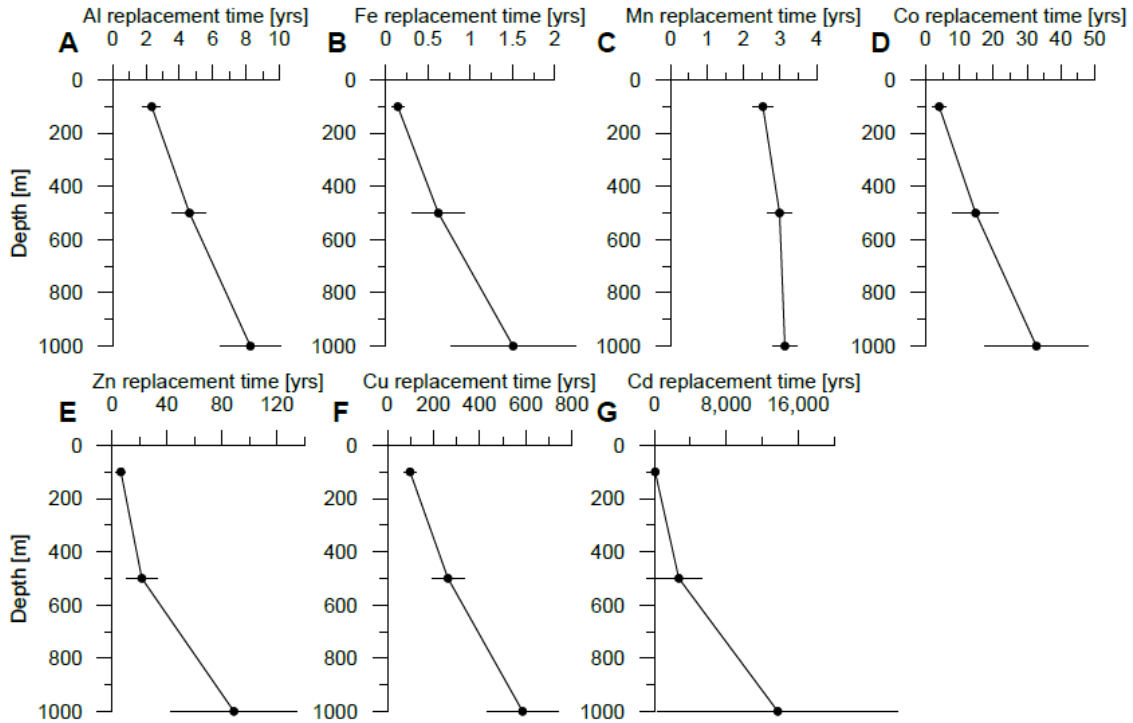
Finally, in Figure S5, we show the deep ocean residence time results based on the replacement time estimates for all elements considered in this study in the form of a periodic table, with comparison to available residence time estimates for most other elements in the periodic table. Note, as discussed

in the main text, replacement times are not necessarily equivalent to residence times, but we make that assumption here in order to see the overall pattern observed among the elements. A broad scale feature is apparent of long residence times for the left and right sides of the table (alkalis, alkali earths, and halogens) with short or intermediate residence times for the nonmetals, transition metals and lanthanides. Within the transition metals, there are interesting non-monotonic trends that, upon a more detailed analysis than attempted here, may provide further insights in the cycling of elements in the ocean.

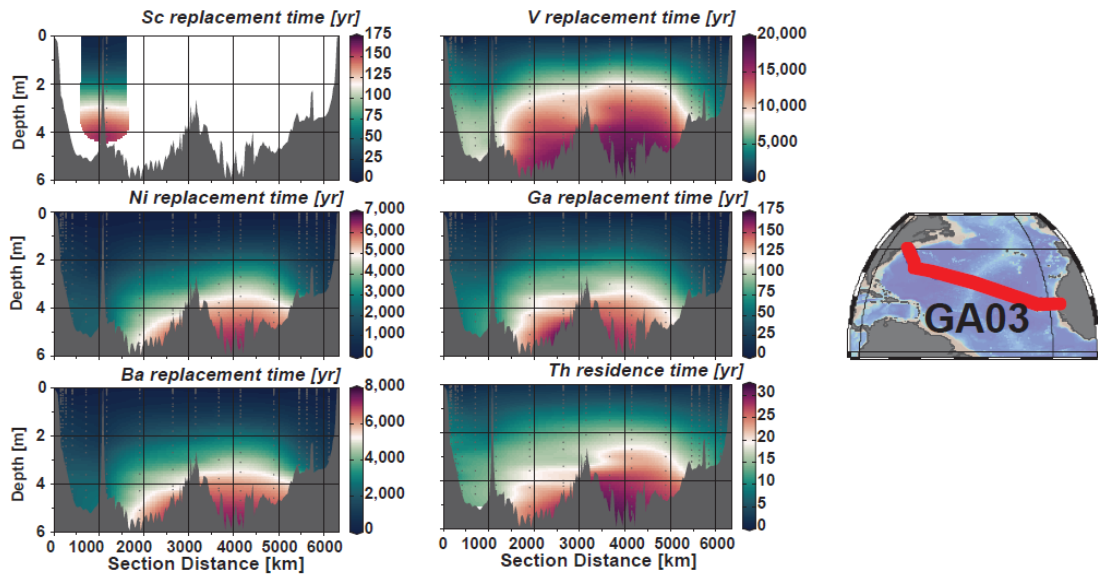


**Figure S1.** Location of GA<sub>03</sub> stations for which replacement time estimates of trace elements can be made based on measured <sup>232</sup>Th supply. GA<sub>03</sub> consisted of two cruises (KN199-4 from Portugal to Cape Verde and KN204-1 from Cape Cod to Cape Verde). To make a North Atlantic basin residence time estimate, the replacement time profiles at these stations were first binned into a common depth scheme. Depth bins were 0-100 m, 100-500 m, 500-1000 m, 1000-1500 m, 1500-2100 m, 2100-3000 m, 3000-4000 m, 4000-5000 m and 5000-5500 m, and were chosen to have at least one observation of <sup>232</sup>Th in each bin at each station. The station profiles within the 10° x 10° boxes labelled with a large number in the map (1 thru 8) were then averaged across depth bins. The averaged profiles from each numbered box were subsequently averaged with an area-weighting factor, taking into account the relative area of the different boxes. KN199-4 Station 1 on the Portuguese coast was averaged in Box 8 and KN199-4 St. 9 on the Mauritanian coast was averaged in Box 5.

### North Atlantic Replacement Times (GA03)

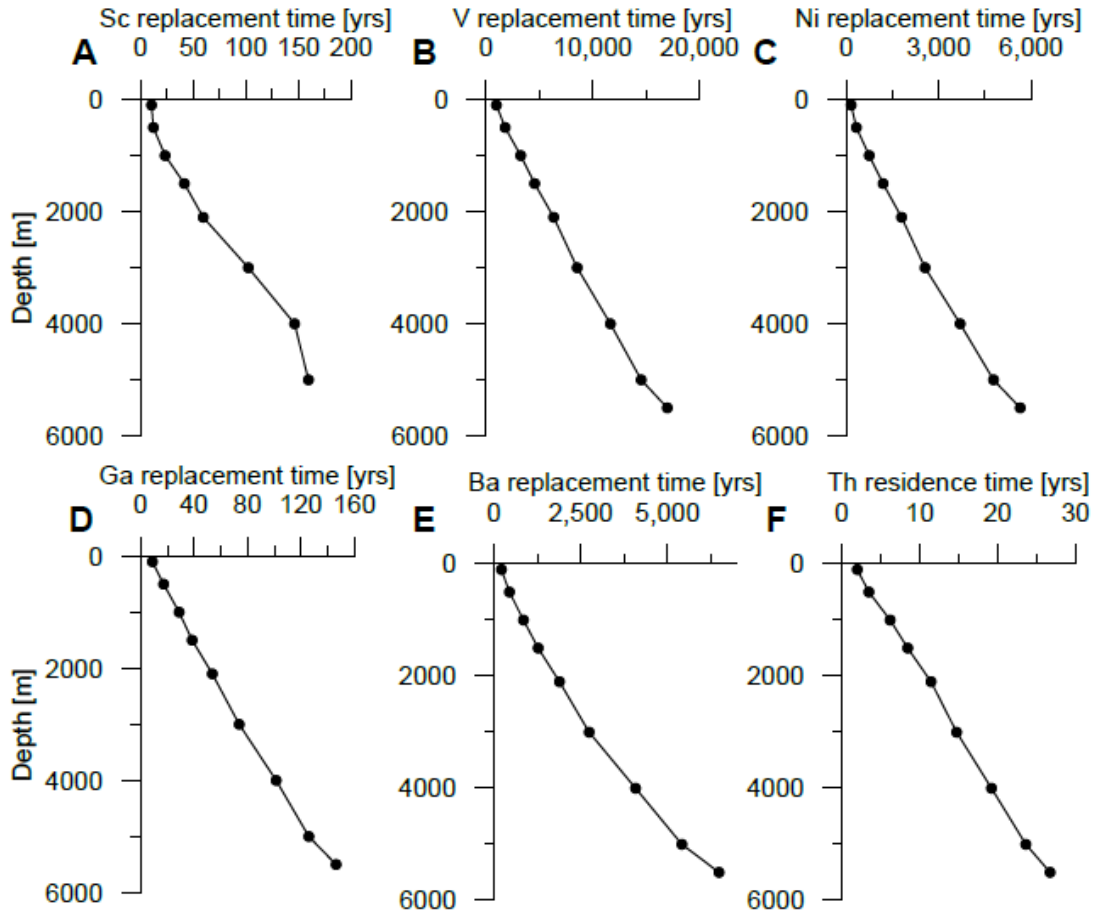


**Figure S2.** Residence time estimates in the upper 1000 m for dissolved elements with respect to dissolved  $^{232}\text{Th}$  supply averaged for the North Atlantic basin using GA03 stations. The error bars represent the standard deviation of estimates arising from using either upper continental crustal or North African dust metal/thorium ratios and metal/thorium fractional solubility ratios defined by HAc or DI leaches of North African dust (Berger et al., 2008; Shelley et al., 2018).

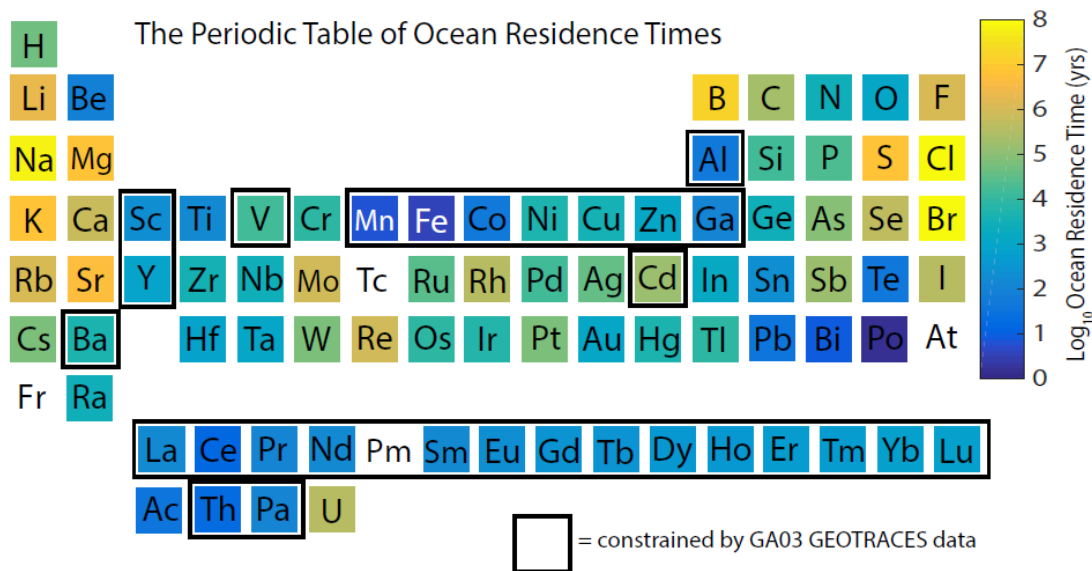


**Figure S3.** Replacement time estimates across the GA03 section for dissolved Sc, V, Ni, Ga, Ba and Th, with respect to dissolved  $^{232}\text{Th}$  supply, upper continental crustal metal/thorium ratios (Rudnick and Gao, 2014) and metal/thorium fractional solubility ratios defined by deionized water leaches of North African dust (Table S1; Shelley et al., 2018). Dissolved Sc data were only available from 1 stations from GA03 (KN204-1 St. 10, co-located with BATS) (Parker et al., 2016). Data on dissolved V, Ni, Ga and Ba are published here for the first time, <https://www.bco-dmo.org/dataset/3827>. Th residence time is based on  $^{230}\text{Th}$  scavenging which is considered in steady-state with supply by  $^{234}\text{U}$  decay.

## North Atlantic Replacement Times (GA03)



**Figure S4.** North Atlantic replacement time estimates for dissolved Sc, V, Ni, Ga and Ba, with respect to dissolved  $^{232}\text{Th}$  supply, upper continental crustal metal/thorium ratios (Rudnick and Gao, 2014) and metal/thorium fractional solubility ratios defined by deionized water leaches of North African dust (Table S1; Shelley et al., 2018), or assumed (see Table 2). Dissolved Sc data were only available from 1 stations from GA03 (KN204-1 St. 10, co-located with BATS) (Parker et al., 2016); therefore, this profile is not a basin average but is likely representative of the subtropical gyre. Dissolved V, Ni, Ga and Ba data are published here for the first time (personal communication). Th residence time is based on  $^{230}\text{Th}$  scavenging which is considered in steady-state with supply by  $^{234}\text{U}$  decay.



**Figure S5.** Residence times of the elements in the ocean, or the average time an element spends in the ocean between its supply and removal. New residence time estimates (outlined in black boxes) are based on the replacement times calculated in this study which were derived by comparing measurements of the element's dissolved inventory to its supply based on measured dissolved  $^{232}\text{Th}$  supply integrated for the whole North Atlantic covered by GEOTRACES section GA03 (see main text for data citations), assuming an upper continental crustal (UCC) composition (Rudnick and Gao, 2014) of the material that supplies the elements and an informed estimate of the elemental solubility of UCC material based on deionized water leaches of North African dust aerosol samples (Shelley et al., 2018). The following references were used for the residence times of the other elements: H (as  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ ) (Berner and Berner, 2012); Li, B, Na, Mg, P (as dissolved inorganic phosphorous), S (as sulfate), Cl, K, and Ca: (Chester and Jickells, 2012); Be, F, Ge, As, Se, Rb, Ru, Pd, Ag, In, Sn, Sb, Se, Te, Cs, Ir, Pt, Hg, Tl and Bi: (Li, 1991); C (as dissolved inorganic carbon), N (as nitrate) and O (as molecular oxygen): (Broecker, 2015); Si (as dissolved inorganic silicon): (Sarmiento and Gruber, 2006); Sc (Parker et al., 2016); Ti: (Orians et al., 1990); Cr: (Reinhard et al., 2013); Br, Sr and I (as iodate): (Broecker and Peng, 1982); Zr, Nb, Hf and Ta (Firdaus et al., 2011); Mo and W: (Sohrin et al., 1998); Rh: (Bertine et al., 1993); Re: (Colodner et al., 2014); Os: (Oxburgh, 2001); Au: (Falkner and Edmond, 1990); and U: (Ku et al., 1977). Note that Tc and Pm (and the trans-uranics, not shown) are not naturally-occurring in the ocean and thus residence times are not given. Residence times of Po and At (and Fr and Ra, not shown) are limited by the length of their radioactive half-lives. Pb has been contaminated in the ocean by anthropogenic input and thus a steady-state residence time is not appropriate to define. The Pb residence time given (150-100 years) is based on residence times of  $^{210}\text{Pb}$  with respect to scavenging derived by (Bacon et al., 1976). The noble gases are essentially non-reactive in the ocean, and therefore, these elements are not shown.

**Table S1.** Upper continental crust compositional ratios (Rudnick and Gao, 2014) and DI leach (Shelley et al., 2018) solubility ratios used in the residence time calculations presented above. The choice of these ratios is a large source of uncertainty in this method of estimating residence time based on thorium supply. Compositional ratios and solubility ratios are likely to differ for different sources (North African dust versus rivers versus hydrothermal vents, etc.). A more complete analysis of the sensitivity of these ratios to these factors is beyond the scope of this contribution.

	Sc	V	Ni	Ga	Ba
Me/Th (UCC) [mol/mol]	6.88	42.07	17.69	5.55	101.04
$S_{Me}/S_{Th}$ (DI leach, or assumed; see supplementary text)	1 (assumed)	25 ± 19 (n = 12)	29 ± 25 (n = 12)	5 (assumed)	12 ± 5 (n = 12)

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