‘The travelling scholar’ is an essay published in Rodney Graham’s artist’s book British Weathervanes (2009, reprinted 2011), produced in conjunction with the inauguration of Graham’s weathervane on the cupola of the Whitechapel Gallery, London. Slyce’s essay explores the legacy of Erasmus and Humanism through the prism of Passmore Edwards and his efforts to establish a public library in Whitechapel. This text continued Slyce’s experiments with alternative modes of writing and art criticism.

Early plans for the Whitechapel Library included provision for an unrealised weathervane. Graham based the weathervane on an anecdote which claimed that Erasmus wrote his most well-known work, The Praise of Folly, on horseback during a journey from Italy to England, around 1510. The form and content of Slyce’s text mirrors Graham’s own chameleon-like art practices, through the adoption of an anachronistic style and tone more closely associated with humanist literature of the 19th century. Although Graham is only mentioned by name once, each written line can be read as a statement about his work and practice. Slyce took a similar approach in his essay ‘Becky Beasley: Vermischte Bemerkungen: correspondences’, in the limited-edition artist’s book Thomas Bernard Malamud (2009). In this context, Slyce weaved a set of 32 quotations (being the number of Bach’s Goldberg Variations as performed by Glenn Gould in 1955; 1981) from Ludwig Wittgenstein’s writings gathered together posthumously in Culture and Value (1977; 1985). The quotations were ordered and adjusted to produce a complementary set of propositions about Beasley’s own practice and the writings she draws upon.

Slyce presented his research into prevalent modes of critical theory at the ‘Contemporary Painting in Context’ symposium December 2013 at the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art in conjunction with Tate Britain.