So are you to my thoughts as food to life,
Or as sweet season’d show’rs are to the ground;
And for the peace of you I hold such strife
As ‘twixt a miser and his wealth is found:
Now proud as an enjoyer, and anon
Doubting the filching age will steal his treasure;
Now counting best to be with you alone,
Then bettered that the world may see my pleasure;
Sometime all full with feasting on your sight,
And by and by clean starved for a look;
Possessing or pursuing no delight,
Save what is had or must from you be took.
Thus do I pine and surfeit day by day;
Or gluttoning on all, or all away.

The opening simile likens the friend
to the speaker’s thoughts, “as food
to life.” The sonnet then proceeds to
list alternative comparisons and
compound them with other similes
and antitheses. The oscillations
between polar opposites that constitute
the basic motion of the sonnets are
here squeezed into one poem, creating
the effect of a fast-moving pendulum.
The speaker’s divided mind weaves a
fresh fabric with well-established
threads, beginning with food and
culminating with “gluttoning” in the
couplet. Other threads in the first
quatrain are those of the seasons (l. 2),
strife or agon (l. 3), and the miser or
niggard (l. 4).

The second quatrain enriches the fabric
by depicting alternating emotions in a
line-for-line and now-then pattern.
Carrying over the miser motif from
line four, the speaker sees himself as
both an enjoyer of, and worrier about,
his treasure—namely his friend. Peace
alone with him is “best” (l. 7) but even
better when the speaker can show off
his friend to “the world.” The food
imagery is combined with sight
(“feasting on your sight,” l. 9) and
developed by its opposite—starvation
for a look. The quickness of the shifts
takes on a frenetic quality that reflects
the anxiety of the speaker as lover.

In this midsection of the sequence, the
seeds are also sown for the future. Just
as Sonnet 74, with its emphasis on
spirit and its sharing of souls (l. 8)
looks forward to Sonnet 116’s
“marriage of true minds,” Sonnet 75
hints at Sonnet 129 in the phrase
“possessing or pursuing” (l. 11), which gains even more interest when expanded later into “mad in pursuit and in possession so” (l. 9). The latter shows the speaker in a much more desperate and jealous mode. Finally, to round out the couplet of Sonnet 75, the thread of gluttony surfaces again, anticipating Sonnet 146, with its injunction “Within be fed, without be rich no more.” (l. 12)

Overall, Sonnet 75, in its nervous ups and downs, implies a troubled psyche, the manic insisting on all or nothing and threatening descent into depression. The emotions may be jagged, but the syntax and structure are under tight control.