

The story of Icarus involves a bargain in which Icarus gets wings made of feathers and beeswax but is warned not to fly too close to the sun. Icarus does and plunges to his death. Similarly Faust strikes a bargain but overreaches the extent of his powers and also, metaphorically, comes crashing down. At the beginning of the play, the chorus describes Faustus's "waxen wings" that "did mount above his reach" and the "melting heavens [that] conspired his overthrow." The chorus is alluding to Icarus, son of the famous craftsman Daedalus. Daedalus and Icarus are imprisoned in Crete by King Minos, who wants to keep Daedalus's latest creation—the Minoan Labyrinth—a secret. To facilitate their escape, Daedalus fashions two sets of wings out of wax and feathers. As they fly to freedom, Icarus soars so high that the sun melts his wings, and he falls and drowns. By comparing Doctor Faustus to Icarus, the chorus suggests that Doctor Faustus exhibits a similar hubris that leads to his own downfall.