"However, in the novel's symbolism Coco's death prefigures Antoinette's dream death: both parrot and heroine are controlled by metropolitan Englishman who, ironically, espouses the doctrine of liberation."

This moment, discussed by Jennifer Gilchrist in her essay "Woman Slavery and The problem of freedom in Wide Sargasso Sea" is useful for reading the moment when the house burns and Coco dies. Because, arguably, Antoinette's future is represented through Coco- a happy girl who gets her wings clipped (locked up by Rochester in the attic), and becomes aggressive (attacks Richard), and then burns (implied ending of the novel); this quote helps solidify the idea that Coco and Antoinette are connected. The quote also points out the hypocrisy that surrounds Mason and Rochester's actions and connects the two characters as antagonists to Antoinette as the protagonist.


"But far from being silly gimmicks or prosaic decorations, parrots serve a crucial function in several Caribbean texts as metaphors for the process of colonial mimicry. Mimicry, I shall argue, is a strategy by which Caribbean writers of different backgrounds seek to interrogate the European literary and cultural traditions which not only give shape to their own work, but also continue to exert considerable influence over the hybrid societies of the Caribbean region" (Huggan, Graham. A Tale of Two Parrots. 2001)

This quote from the essay A Tale of Two Parrots: Walcott, Rhys, and the Uses of Colonial Mimicry explains that some Caribbean writers utilize parrots as a metaphor for colonial mimicry. Like in Wide Sargasso Sea, Caribbean writing seeks to interrogate the affect Europeans have had on their own writing as well as their culture across time. In Wide Sargasso Sea, this can best be seen in the passage regarding the death of Antoinette's falling parrot, Coco. Earlier in the novel Antoinette's mother married an incoming European, Mr Mason. At his hand, Coco's wings are clipped, preventing it from flying and keeping it tethered down. Birds are often used as symbols of freedom, and Mr Mason's action of clipping Coco's wings serves to emphasize the control Europeans have over natives of the island. Coco can be used as a metaphor for the island and its people; its death serves to represent the takeover by Europeans and their invasion of Caribbean cultures. Later, this inhibition of Coco's freedom later leads to its death, beginning an extended metaphor throughout the book regarding European control and assimilation versus the cultural integrity and independence of the island and its people.

(Huggan, Graham. 'A Tale of Two Parrots: Walcott, Rhys, and the Uses of Colonial Mimicry'. University of Wisconsin Press 2001)

" Thus, Wide Sargasso Sea's double narrative structure- which only gives us access to the Black Creole voices and actions through the consciousness of the two major narrators-attests not to Rhys's imperialism but to her insight into the workings of the ideological system and its categories of representation."

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Madorossian's essay on Wide Sargasso Sea deals with the issues of race and gender in the text, with an emphasis on how Rhys uses narration to discuss race and gender. Essentially, this quote is explaining that Rhys's decision to focalize the narration only through white characters is not done to try to take away the voice of the black characters, but rather to emphasize the lack of representation these people experienced in reality. This quote argues that in Rhys's point of view, to focalize narration through the recently emancipated citizens of the island would be appropriating their culture. Her style of narration is a much better representative of the actual race relations of the island. The passage on page 25 of the text is a prime example of the racial tension on the island where Antoinette grew up. The reader has an understanding of the event through the mindset of Antoinette, even though the fire was set by the black Creole's and most of the action of the scene was initiated by them. This divide in narration that Madorossian discusses emphasizes the idea of "otherness" each racial group experienced.