Following the trials of Oscar Wilde, the Italian island of Capri operated as a refuge for sexual exiles from across Europe who retreated from persecution and criminal proceedings into Capri’s permissive expatriate community. In the 1920s, Henry Gauthier-Villars described the island as “a Geneva or a Moscow of the future internationalism of homosexuality,” and he argued that this bewitching setting was capable of remaking “normal [couples]” in its image.” His comments on Capri speak directly to the experience of British writers Compton and Faith Mackenzie, who moved to the island in 1913, became enmeshed in its queer cosmopolitan community, and began conducting extended relationships with other partners with one another’s approval. In this talk, I will discuss the role that the island of Capri played in the Mackenzies’ reconstitution of their bond. Acknowledging that expatriate visitors to Capri fetishized and exoticized the Italian island and its inhabitants, conceiving of the location as mystical, primitive, and destabilizing, I will interrogate the intermingling of cosmopolitanism and “Mediterraneanism” in the Mackenzies’ representations of the transformations their marriage underwent during their time on Capri.

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