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## Les jardins de Samira (Samira's Garden) \*\*\*\*



### Reviewed by Lindsay Mackie

Stars Sanaa Mouziane, Mohammed Khouyyi, Youssef Britel, Mohammed Majd

Written by Brahim Hani & Latif Lahlou

Cinematography by Nicolas Massart

Certification UK 15

Runtime 96 minutes

Directed by Latif Lahlou

This is such a good movie. It's been given its due already at various festivals and because of what it covers – love, marriage, sex, too much work, too little work, impotence, shoes and Alzheimers – it deserves a general release. Written and directed by Moroccan filmmaker Latif Lahlou, Samira's Garden combines a simple subject with lashings of social and political observation about women's lot. But it's no tract. This is a set of ruinous human relationships that twist and turn, show chinks of light and then falter and fail again.

Samira is the young woman whose family nag her to get married. They find her a good looking silver fox (Mohammed Khouyyi) who's a lot older but is prosperous, devout and seems just the ticket. She falls in line, aware of the attractions of stability and economic certainty, and then it turns out that her new husband is impotent. Samira is played by Sanaa Mouziane, an actress both sumptuous and sexy, with terrific comic ability and a lovely free and easy habitation of this part.

Stuck in the back of beyond, looking after the ancient and demented father of her husband, Samira's exuberance attaches her to Farouk, the young nephew. Events unfold pretty much according to the usual script involving elderly husbands and handsome young relatives, but along the way, with some flashbacks and Lahlou's calm exposure of the harsh economics of life in Morocco, we get depth and context. Mainly, this is a movie about sexual passion and what happens when it is frustrated and distorted – Samira is a sexual being; her husband denies his impotence and this clash, with the failed attempts of both husband and wife to get to grips with their personal disaster, is the story. The film has been described as taboo breaking – male impotence hasn't been the subject of choice of many Western filmmakers, either – and Samira's Garden shows yet again how good movies break through cultural preconceptions in a trice, consign them to the knackers' yard, and give audiences the sheer pleasure of a good looking, sexy, thoughtful film like this.

- Samira's Garden screened in London as part of the [Women's Cinema from Tangiers to Tehran](#) film festival

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