The 800th review is really not a review. It's the Not Review.

The 800th book in the Book Review Project is *The Asylum* by John Harwood. This (audio)book is hard to review because it's part psychological thriller, part mystery and if I tell you too much, then I'll find myself in spoiler territory.

The premise is simple, but not. It's 1882 and Georgina Ferrars finds herself as a voluntary patient in a mental asylum. The problem is that Georgina has no memory of arriving, let alone admitting herself to a mental asylum. The staff at the hospital is concerned because Georgina has admitted herself under the name Lucy Ashton. Lucy Ashton is the name of a character is a series of popular books. It would be like me showing up at the Royal claiming to be Scarlett O'Hara. Naturally the staff thinks Lucy/Georgina is nuts. The more Georgina tries to prove her identity, the crazier she sounds and the voluntary admission evolves into an involuntary admission. Georgina explains that she lives in London with her uncle and works at his bookstore. All the hospital has to do is contact him and he will confirm her identity. Things get worse when Georgina's physician visits London, meets her uncle, the household staff, neighbors, *and* Georgina.

So who is this woman claiming to be Georgina Ferrars? Ah, the mystery part! Lucy/Georgina must put aside her self doubts and figure out why she is in the asylum and why she can't remember the last several weeks of her life. They must be connected. And who is this woman in London who claims to be Georgina Ferrars?

I liked this book because often in mysteries, the author floods the reader with a lot of false leads and wild goose chases. Instead, Lucy/Georgina, a mousy Victorian spinster, uses her intelligence and powers of observation to slowly answer the questions in her head, despite the memory loss. She also learns to be sneaky and manipulative, skills she never thought she'd need to develop. Georgina realizes she was very unhappy with her life and her work with her uncle at the bookstore but it takes this mystery to force Georgina to comprehend her unhappiness. The character evolves which is something I like in a novel. While the book started off a little slow, it gained momentum as Georgina starts to doubt her sanity and her situation becomes more desperate. All very entertaining!