

Transcript of Interview with Aidan Moore (Selected pieces)

Espen, the interviewer, is referred to as "E". Aidan, interviewee, is "A".

E: So, you had the week off from school last week, right?

A: Yeah, I had the week off. Their holidays change every year, because they use the lunar calendar for religious holidays. Sometimes their holidays turn up right next to each other. So I had a week off. They call holidays Bayram. So it was Kurban Bayram, which means sacrifice Bayram. And Monday was also a holiday. Today is kind of a holiday. So it's been weird. I like it when it's spread out. Hopefully, we'll have more holidays over the year.

E: So you didn't know you had a different host family until you got to the airport?

A: Yeah, no, um. I was crazily sleep deprived and really confused, and I went to the baggage claim, and I got my bag, and then I went out. I didn't have to go through customs, I think because it was a domestic flight, but I'm not sure. I just walked out of baggage claim, and there was this person that I didn't recognize with a sign that said my name on it. And then there was a lady holding a baby, and other people, and I was really confused. It turned out that the lady with the baby was my host aunt. I went to my apartment, and then baby lady took me back to her house, and then we found my school the next day, and it was really weird. And then they made me eat a bunch of Turkish food, which is spicy.

E: So you didn't have to go through customs at all?

A: Oh, I went through customs in İstanbul. Amsterdam to İstanbul. But I guess the flight was just İstanbul to İzmir, so no customs I guess.

E: How long have you been there now? A month, ish?

A: A month on the twenty-third, so like 33 days. And they use military time here.

E: Oh, really?

A: Yeah. One time, I saw the clock, and it said 21. I don't know if you say twenty-one. Twenty-one hundred? Whatever, I saw it said twenty-one, which means nine o' clock, but I thought it said eleven o' clock, so I got ready for bed. And I was almost ready to go to sleep at nine o' clock at night. And I looked at my phone, and I was like, oh, it's not that late. I'm sure my family was like, what is he doing? Brushing his teeth at like 8:45?

E: Um, let's see. Let's talk about food.

A: Oh, ok! I started to take pictures, when no one's watching, because I feel weird taking pictures of food in front of people. So my favorite one is called döner. They get this giant lamb part, I don't know if it's a leg, it's pretty big. Torso sized. And then it goes on this rotisserie kind of thing, and they shave really thin pieces off of it, and then add tomatoes, and put it over pita bread, and yogurt over it, and it's really good because the meat is really, really tender, and really thin, so it's like melt in your mouth lamb. Mmmm, that's really good. And today, for dinner, I had bow tie pasta with yogurt on it, and that was a little bit sour.

E: So the yogurt's different there, right?

A: It's like, Greek. Greek, Greek yogurt. One of the weirdest, things, I think, was, you know that Greek, tsatsiki sauce, with yogurt and cucumbers? Well they made that, but they also added lime to it, and it was so sour. Like Greek yogurt and lime juice together is just... Yeah I almost didn't make it through the whole thing.

What else? Well, every morning for breakfast, well, during weekdays, I'm usually the only one here. Everyone else is at work, or school, or in transit. So I make scrambled eggs, or cereal. But on the weekends, breakfast is raw cucumbers, and raw tomatoes, with white cheese- they don't have any yellow cheeses here. White cheese that's also pretty strong. There's bread, and then, oh, what do you call them? Sour cherries that are in goo?

E: Maraschino?

A: No, they're like cooked down. Oh, it starts with a "c"...

E: It's not a compote is it?

A: Compote, yeah. Oh, tart cherry compote is really, really good. Yeah, there's lots of fruit. And markets, which are really cool. Unless you get lost in them.

E: Didn't you say you got lost in one, and was late to school one day?

A: Yeah, I was walking, it was my third day here, I was not very familiar with the route, at all. So I walked and there was this bazaar, and I was like, "Ok, that's cool, I can just walk straight down, because I thought I just had a straight shot all the way down from that street to the street where I turn to my school, but it turns out, there's this fork, at a thirty degree angle, so I completely missed the fork, and I ended up, almost down by the water, and then I asked this lady, who didn't speak English, and she was like, "Oh, yeah, go that way, and then, turn that way." And then I eventually found it. I was like, a half-hour late to school.

E: What's school like?

A: It's pretty interesting. I have like fifteen classes. Let's see, there's Geometry, Algebra II, Physics, Geography, Biology, Chemistry, Turkish Literature, Turkish Language, German, Spanish, English, Music, a different music, I think that's it, it's a lot.

E: You said, before, that it's a lot of lecturing.

A: It's a lot of lecturing, and dictation. Luckily the Turkish language is completely phonetic, so I can usually get the gist of what it's saying even though I don't understand it. But the teachers just read from the book, or notes, or whatever, and we just write it down. And usually, I don't catch on to the fact that they're telling us to write until they repeat it twice, and then I'm already behind, and it's really confusing.

E: I know in France, there's a much bigger gap between the students and teachers. Is it like that there?

A: I really like the teachers here. They'll get up, walk around. They're not just static, in front of a room, spilling out foreign. And a lot of them like to try out their English on me. And they grade very differently. Everything is out of one hundred.

E: Is there anything that hasn't met your expectations? Stereotypes or something that you thought would occur, but didn't?

A: I don't know. Religion, I guess I thought would play a bigger role, but really, everyone here in Izmir at least seems to be really, really progressive. Kutay and I have quite a few Fridays when we both get home from school, where we both just talk for three or four hours about politics in America and Turkey, and it's been really fun explaining Obamacare to him. And the AKP, which is the dominant party here. I really expected, like, everyone, before I came said that oh, yeah, Kurban Bayram, they're going to kill a goat, right in front of you, but my family didn't celebrate. Other people have said, "Oh yeah, my mom said that the animals actually like being killed, they know that they're doing it for God." But everyone's been really welcoming, and inviting. I do have a theology class, which is weird, and I don't understand anything, except for when they say "pagan", and then they talk about the Big Bang theory. Not the show. I wonder what it would be like to have a theology class in America, at West Sound (laughs). And then, they have the call to prayer, which, at first, was really, really cool, and interesting, and now it's just kind of annoying, and I'm almost not hearing it. I wake up, several times a week, because there's one that happens at like 6:20, I think. So sometimes that wakes me up, which is a little bit annoying. But it does this really cool thing. All the buildings here are stone, so it goes throughout the city, and reverberates. It sounds like people are applauding, or screaming or shouting or something, but I think it's just the acoustics of the city which is really, really cool. Sometimes when you get two or three mosques, at the same time, because they all do it at the same time, a few seconds off, I don't think they're saying the same thing, but it kind of muddles over each other, and gets, um, yeah, interesting.

E: Do you have any expectations for the rest of the year?

A: I really want to learn Turkish, to have somewhat of a personality to all of the people who don't speak English. I'm a person who only lives through my translator, sometimes I can't explain it all. So yeah, I hope that I start seeming like a human being, with some sort of emotions, and everything. Because right now, I just feel kind of blank, and like, "Oh, he's an American, but we don't know anything about him." Hmm, any other expectations? I really want to travel a lot more. In six months, in April, we're allowed to do independent travel, without anyone. Not leave the country, I don't think. But if I want to, I could go to Cappadocia, or Istanbul, or something, if I haven't been there with my host family.

E: When does school end?

A: School ends... I don't know, but I know I'm leaving the country on June 28th.

A: I actually want to learn how to cook some of the stuff here too. Because it's just kind of been served, and I don't know the names of hardly anything.

E: Does anyone in your family really cook?

A: I think everyone cooks, actually, which is cool. It usually happens when I'm not home. Oh, and there's okra. There's okra here, and I really don't like it. I made the mistake of giving a thumbs up the first time I had it, and so I don't think it's going to go away. They think I like it. It's just so slimy. It has the texture of peach fuzz on the outside, and then it's slimy, and they have these tiny, squishy seeds.

E: Well, here's Poulsbo. (*Turns laptop towards window with view from west side of Liberty Bay*)

A: Oh... It looks... Gloomy.

E: Anyways, could you describe your daily schedule?

A: So I'm really happy school here starts at nine o' clock, which is so great, and I want to petition for West Sound to start at nine o' clock, because I don't have to get up until 7:45. And I'll probably go to bed at midnight, but I go to bed at like 10:00 on week nights, so that's about ten hours of sleep, which is really great. So I get up at 7:45, and take a shower, cook breakfast, and then I walk, about 15 minutes. I try to leave around 8:35 to get there at 9, with five or ten minutes, so I'm not late if anything happens. On the way, I think I said six before, it's actually a four lane highway. It's interesting- very exciting to cross. But I've never seen a car accident, seen one on the news, or seen anyone get anywhere close to being hit. I think the drivers here are really crazy, but they also know when to stop, and they're very aware that there are people everywhere. So many people, it's kind of crazy. I was walking home from school one day, and there were tons of people. Kids, playing in the street. So I walk to school, enough of that. I have my first class at nine o' clock, it lasts 40 minutes. Then we have a ten minute break, and another 40 minute class. Four classes in the first part of the day. We have lunch for an hour, which is also very, very nice. And then four more classes, and then school gets out at 4:20. I think it's a little longer than West Sound. The most interesting parts are the weekends. School is fine, but it's nice to have a break, and actually be able to go out. I really want to go to a Chinese restaurant, because I miss Chinese take-out. (*laughs*)

E: So, what's the city like? How is it organized?

A: So I live in Yeşilyurt, it's a very residential place, nothing to see. I live by the İzmirspor metro station, and the metro is so beautiful here. It's just one line that goes back and forth, and it's impossible to get lost on, and it's really great. There's a transfer station for an aboveground train that they have. There's just, like, two lines that go through the whole city. It's very nice, not Washington D.C., or New York, or anything. And there are ferries that go from Konak and Alsancak to Karşıyaka, and those are really cool. They're just passenger ferries. And, unlike in Washington, they're single sided, so they do this weird, really fast thing in reverse, and whip around, so the front of the boat is actually facing the front. I laughed really hard the first time, because they're not Washington ferries. Washington State Ferries that are double sided. It's such a painstaking step to turn the whole boat around.

E: Well, when I look at it (a map of İzmir), it doesn't really look like there are any big buildings or anything. It seems very sprawling.

A: Yeah, it's giant. Our apartment is seven stories high, which is pretty high for any building in this city. 'Cause the hills are gigantic; they're like Seattle-sized hills, except for they're paved with bricks. We're on a fault line, kind of, and on sea level, so they can't build high buildings. So

they just kind of expand out. I think the Hilton is the tallest building here, and that's probably 30 or 40 stories high. There's no really tall financial district with really tall skyscrapers, which is kind of sad. Everything is pretty old. Probably from the 60's. Sometimes I look at buildings, and say, "Wow, those are probably from centuries ago, which is kind of cool." And there's no real touristy things, except for the beaches. There's the clock tower, which is disappointingly short. And there's statues and stuff, but there's no... ferries wheel, or Grand Bazaar, or anything. The only bazaars that happen are for buying vegetables, and underwear. There's no exotic spice markets, or fine jewelry.

Espen's father enters, referred to as "EF"

EF: So, Aidan, you ended up in art school? A school for the arts?

A: Yeah, kind of. They have different courses. There's a math, a language course, and then an arts course, but the arts is a different section of the school. But I got put into the science course, just because the people at class speak better English. But I have music, kind of like West Sound music club, and then another music class, which is horrible and unorganized.

EF: So there's a focus on the arts at that school.

A: Yeah, yeah there is. They have concerts and stuff, and visual art.

E: They wanted you to possibly perform at a concert, right?

A: Yeah, they want me to play something. Now, I'm learning a piano duet for Eine Kleine Nachtmusik. The music teacher plays violin. He says he wants me to learn it in two weeks, but I don't think that's going to happen, because I can only practice twice a week. So, that's happening. I'm making a speech, in English, about Atatürk, the founder of the Republic on November 10th, and that's kind of scary. It's in front of the whole entire school.

EF: Wow. So how many people would that be?

A: About 500. They are from kindergarten to twelfth grade.

E: How many people are there in your grade?

A: Uh... 40, I think. Maybe 50. But I guess the arts school also has a class, so maybe 60 or 70. Not a ton.

E: What's the average size for a school, do you think? Because I'm guessing that's not average.

A: Well actually, they're a lot bigger. They said elementary schools are actually the biggest ones. Sometimes they have 1,000 students. But I'm at a private school, which usually tend to be smaller. And I've heard that the public schools are not very good.

EF: And what is the political climate like right now? Do you get a sense for that?

A: I've only seen pictures on FaceBook of people actively protesting, which is really interesting. But my brother and I talk about politics, American politics, Turkish politics. Sometimes people

ask me questions like, "Have you met Obama, do you like Obama?", Then they ask me things about Turkish politics, which I try not to get in to, because things are pretty divided. The winning party here has like a 60% majority, and that's kind of a conservative party. The AKP. And the left wing parties are all kind of split up, so there's no way to form an opposition that can actually defeat at any elections. Because they have quite a few different parties.

EF: And do you consider that you're in city center, or in the suburbs?

A: It's a pretty residential part, but there's not really any downtown here. It's an interesting city, there's no one central place. But I'm in a nicer part of town. They've told me what parts to stay away from, where not to get off on the metro. But as you can see from the map, everything is really spread out.

E: Well, I think I should eat lunch, because I have to leave pretty soon.

A: Ok, well, bye!

E: Bye!